HOW CHRISTIAN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP PRACTICES IMPACT THE CREATION

OF A SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT WHERE SPIRITUAL NURTURE CAN OCCUR IN

STUDENTS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

by

Deborah Hollis

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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APPROVED BY:

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand how Christian school leader practices impact the creation of a school environment where spiritual nurture can occur in students. Through criteria sampling from an open web search of ACSI Christian schools in Pennsylvania, selected participants were elementary and upper school principals, an assistant administrator, heads of school, and an assistant head of school. As one of the largest Christian education associations rooted in a biblical worldview, ACSI has developed the Christian School Leadership Framework (CSLF) which describes important competencies and behaviors for administrators and/or leaders of Christian schools. The theoretical framework that guided this study was Bartsch's (2006) major practices of spiritual leadership. Christian school leadership practices perceived by school leaders to create an environment where spiritual nurture can occur was the phenomenon of the study. For data collection, I used interviews, documents, and one focus group session.   Based on Creswell's (2014) data analysis spiral, phenomenological analysis included memoing and coding of interviews, document analysis, and a focus group. The themes generated from the data collection and analysis were used to develop a thick description of the phenomenon. In support of Bartsch's (2006) spiritual leadership framework, findings show Christian school leaders in ACSI affiliated schools in Pennsylvania perceive their leadership practices, theological beliefs, and leading and developing the spirituality of others impacts the creation of an environment where spiritual nurture can occur.

Keywords: Christian faith, Christian nurture, Christian spirituality, community of faith, spiritual leadership, spirituality, vocation.

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Dedication

     This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Evangelist Mattie V. Hollis, an angel on earth. "Mom Hollis," as many lovingly called her, was the mother of ten children. My mother dedicated her life to God in fulfilling a higher call of evangelism in the faith, power and love of Jesus Christ, not only for me and my siblings, but for God's people everywhere as she travelled fulfilling the work of an evangelist. After supporting me and my siblings in achieving our educational and career goals, she went back to school and obtained her GED, followed by achieving her Bachelor of Arts degree in Theology with high honors in 1992, at the age of 66. My mother provided a most lively, vivid, interesting, educational, religious, morally sound, truthful, secure, loving and caring home life while growing up as a child and into my adult years. She taught by example, prioritizing God, family, and education. She also taught me so many life lessons of which I live by today. The most important was living a life in Jesus Christ serving others in love, joy and peace of God. My mom was my first teacher, preacher, doctor, lawyer, counselor, and more. Her faith in God helped to increase my belief and faith in God. I realized from a very young age that my mother had a close connection to God, what I came to know as a personal relationship with God, of which I strive for, even now. My nine siblings and I saw for ourselves that this was so, since she seemed to always know when we were lying, and even what we were thinking. What was amazing to my siblings and I, was the fact that she appeared to see things before they happened, and problems seemed to fix themselves. I still remember many years ago while I was in undergraduate school, working on my bachelor's degree, my mom looked at me and spoke into my future and said, " I heard Dr. Hollis for you, Deb." I am so very grateful to God for my mother, Mattie V. Hollis.

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The journey to achieving my dissertation was a true test of patience and perseverance, yet exciting; however, it would not have been at all possible to attain my goal of achieving my doctorate without the grace of God and the help of several significant individuals.

To God: I want to thank You for life and the opportunity to complete this dissertation journey. I give all the glory, honor and praise to You, Lord. For, it was your grace, mercy, strength, wisdom, and power in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit which helped me to achieve this goal.

To my nine siblings: I want to thank each of you, Raymond (Scrappy; Pastor Parker), Sherman (Sherm), Anthony (Tony), Nathan (Nate the Gospel Music Man), Karen (Sister), Phil (my Pastor Phil), Lori (Sister Friend), Michael (Mike; Prince Michael), and Anna (Ann). I honor each of you. There is something so amazing about my siblings that inspires me and touches my heart. First, I am grateful to have siblings who believe in the power of prayer and healing. Secondly, I appreciate my siblings who have also dedicated their lives to Jesus Christ and each has a personal relationship with God, as exemplified by our loving mother. Our faith and life in Jesus Christ makes us stronger together. Thank you for your constant prayers and words of encouragement which helped to strengthen me through this dissertation journey.

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List of Abbreviations

Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI)

Christian School Leadership Framework (CSLF)

Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPP)

Leadership Framework and Competency Model (LFCM)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Leadership in Christian schools is Christ-centered, grounded in a biblical worldview and guided by a mission to nurture followers of Jesus Christ (Association of Christian Schools International, 2016). Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) contended there is a growing demand for capable leaders of Christian schools who are committed in their hearts to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and to fulfill their unique calling of spiritual nurture in education (ACSI, 2016). The mission of ACSI is to promote effective Christian school leadership. Research shows leaders of Christian schools associated with ACSI are most concerned with the integration of mission and practice in an intentionally nurturing way that influences and inspires students (ACSI, 2016; Boerema, 2011; Jeynes, 2012; Nelson, 2015).

In his youth, Jesus experienced intellectual, spiritual, physical, and social growth and development as he "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2:52, KJV). Christian school leadership practice is carrying out that mission in thought and action towards the spiritual development of children in an intentional, nurturing manner (ACSI, 2016).

Chapter One of this study explains my motivation to understand how Christian school leadership practices impact the creation of a school environment where spiritual nurturing can occur in students. In addition, the subsections in this chapter include background, situation to self, problem statement, purpose statement, significance of the study, and research questions. The chapter concludes with a summary of the research study.

Background

Christian school leadership is the ministry of the gospel of Jesus Christ which calls the believer to a commitment of serving others that they may be transformed in the image of Christ. Within a biblical worldview, the Christian school leader accepts the call and commission to lead others toward a faith in living a Christ-centered life. Furthermore, Christian school leadership is unique in its traditions of how Jesus taught and commissioned his disciples. From the heart, the Christian school leader nurtures others in the development of their faith as the Christian leader is also engaged in the process of personal and Christian growth in understanding, skills, and knowledge of the faith (Taylor, 1966).

Historical Context

Traditional perspectives of leadership are based either on political or business organizational models of leadership where a leader may rely upon the authority and power that they have in coercing people to act in a certain way and on moral values that are not necessarily Christian, which cannot provide the basis of Christian leadership (Pejza, 1994). There are distinct characteristics of Christian leadership which serve as the basis for the ideal nature of leadership: (a) leadership is not synonymous with position or authority; (b) leadership is empowering others; (c) everyone has the potential to be a leader; at least some of the time as they become members of the community of shared beliefs; (d) leadership is communal and shared and requires trust and cooperation; (e) leadership is generative as Jesus empowered His disciples to preach proclaiming His message, generating new leaders; (f) leadership is service as the Son of Man, Jesus, came not to be served but to serve and give His life as a ransom for many lost souls; (g) leadership is about transformation and change as a new reality within oneself (Pejza, 1994). Christian leadership holds a deeper dimension, according to Blackaby and Blackaby (2001) who

contend, "Christian leaders who know God" and "move people to God's agenda" understand and practice the distinct principles of spiritual leadership (pp. 14, 20).

Christian leadership over the past 30 years, has emphasized spiritual formation in referring to the work of the Holy Spirit in Christian education as an "exclusive reliance upon schooling models for the passing on of a living Christian faith" (Pazmino, 2010, p. 356). There is a need across Christian traditions to attend to the spiritual roots confirmed to sustain a living Christian faith and have Christian educators heed the call of spiritual renewal shifting their focus upon spiritual formation and spirituality (Pazmino, 2010). In a study of Christian school leaders, Banke, Maldonado, and Lacy (2012) found participants believe spiritual leadership is an active, personal process for each individual and that spiritual leaders see the importance of relationships with others, exhibit personal growth, provide for needs and opportunities, promote personal and spiritual growth, have a personal relationship with God, exhibit humility, are real and accessible, serve as a mentor, encourage, and support all of the members of the community. Harrison and Allen (2013) reported Christian school administrators tend to focus on the importance of the vision and mission of their schools, using their spiritual leadership as an influential factor in problem solving and decision making.

Social Context

ACSI affiliated Christian schools embody a mission and vision based on a biblical worldview which Christian educators help cultivate in an intentional nurturing process toward spiritual development or formation (ACSI, 2016). Tate and Parker (2007) use Erikson's (1980) developmental theory to explain spiritual growth in stages and "the beliefs and behaviors that characterize these stages" (p. 218). They contend the use of Erikson's (1980) developmental theory may also help increase spiritual leaders' understanding of the nature of spiritual

development (Tate & Parker, 2007). Relative to spiritual development, spiritual formation can also be explained as a process of spiritual maturity (Anthony, 2001). Anthony (2001) describes spiritual formation as an "ongoing path of developmental learning and experience" that involves "predictable phases of learning" in Christian educational experience (p. 91). The nurturing process is also referred to as spiritual nurture. Rumer (2006) expressed Christian education as spiritual nurture integrated in total life and work of Christians. Furthermore, Christian education apart from spiritual nurture will result in no learning, in as much as spiritual nurture will not proceed apart from intentional Christian education (Rumer, 2006). Dettoni and Wilhoit (1995) contended that the issue of nurturing is most central for Christians, as Jesus was a teacher and commissions Christians to "go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you…" (Matthew 28:19-20, KJV).

Theoretical Context

The theoretical background is based on Bartsch's (2006) spiritual leadership practices where a Christian school leader needs to create an environment where spiritual nurture can occur. As the spiritual leader or head of the school, the "principal has the key role in developing and leading the community of faith within the school" in understanding and practice of spirituality" (Bartsch, 2006, p. 34). According to Bartsch (2006) the Christian school leader is responsible for the spiritual formation being directly involved with the staff who will then be responsible for the spiritual formation of the students. Christian school leaders of ACSI schools have taken on the task of developing children spiritually in an intentional, nurturing manner (ACSI, 2016). ACSI is the largest Protestant educational organization in the world and governs approximately 24,000 schools in more than 100 countries. The mission of ACSI is to strengthen

Christian schools and equip Christian educators worldwide, with competencies of effective

school leadership as they prepare students academically, spiritually, physically, socially, and

vocationally, and inspire them to become devoted followers of Jesus Christ (ACSI, 2016). As

the school leader is pivotal in the nurturing process of Christian education, the leaders of ACSI

have developed the Christian School Leadership Framework (CSLF) to assist in the process of

preparing effective Christian school leaders (ACSI, 2016). Modeled from the Knowledge Is

Power Program (KIPP) Leadership Framework (KIPP, 2016), the CSLF defines and describes

the proficiency skills, knowledge, and attitudes for effective Christian school leadership. Studies

show (Boerema, 2011; Nelson, 2015; Jeynes, 2012) that leaders of Christian schools associated

with ACSI are most concerned with the integration of mission and practice which is an area

underrepresented in research literature.

Situation to Self

School leadership has been an important part of my life since 2005 when I began my

career as an assistant principal in an urban school district. As a Christian, I am passionate about

school leadership in the Christian faith communities, particularly Christian schools. Being raised

in Christian beliefs and faith in Jesus Christ, I have developed meaning and purpose in my life.

My personal and professional experience and philosophical assumptions related to this study are

grounded in a biblical worldview. As a Christian, I have served as a school leader in a public

school setting for over 20 years. I always considered being an educator a calling of God with a

great sense of moral responsibility. Throughout my teaching experience, I also served as a

church ministry leader. After nine years as a teacher, I felt a sense of God's calling to school

leadership and became an assistant principal, while continuing in church ministry leadership at a

local church.   Christian leadership is unique and requires faith and belief in Jesus Christ and a

commitment to lead others intentionally to a committed faith in Jesus Christ and then toward a Christ-centered life. Therefore, to fulfill the Christian education mission, vision, and task as Jesus exemplified and commissions, believers must first understand the importance of integrating mission with practice. In a more practical sense, my desire is to research the themes of the phenomena of administrative practices perceived by Christian school leaders to create an environment where spiritual nurture can occur in Christian schools. I particularly chose to do this study in Christian education leadership practices because I am a Christian and currently a school leader in an urban public school setting with a commitment to follow Jesus Christ in faith, word, and deed through the Holy Spirit. In addition, I also wanted to understand the vocation or call of the principal as the spiritual leader of the Christian school community of faith. Leading others to Jesus Christ while living a Christ-centered life is fulfilling the Great Commission of Jesus Christ that was assigned to all believers. The Christian school leader has a responsibility of developing and building up the school community of faith, and understanding this responsibility as a spiritual leader can provide insight into the various places of responsibility in which the Christian school leader is called to operate (Bartsch, 2006).

Being a Christian and school leader also means that the Holy Spirit is working internally in shaping me from within to live a life of faith and externally in teaching and leading others to live a life of faith in Jesus Christ (Bartsch, 2006). Man is a thinking being consisting of physical, psychological, and spiritual traits which can also be identified as body, soul, and spirit. Wyckoff (1955) contends that each part of the human being is in constant development of its biological disposition and interaction of the individual constitution with a specific environment, consciousness, unconscious dynamics, conflict, tension, problems, integration including unity, wholeness, focus, direction, and membership character or group identity. This investigation is

important in gaining an understanding of the spiritual growth of the Christian school leader as a spiritual leader to impact creation of a school environment where spiritual nurture can occur in students.

My study focused on the reality from the perspectives of the participants which was from a Christian biblical worldview. My personal point of view was from a Christian biblical worldview. The participants who experienced the phenomenon described the experience within a particular Christian school setting. The participants' detailed descriptions of the administrative practices within their school setting helped to determine the reality as seen through many viewpoints.

Moustakas (1994) explained in a phenomenological study that the researcher does not make assumptions, but simply focuses on a topic and constructs a question or problem to guide the study (p. 47). Social constructivism is the paradigm that guided my phenomenological study where I, as the researcher, constructed the meaning of a phenomenon based on the descriptive experiences of Christian school leadership practices that impact the creation of a school environment where spiritual nurture can occur in students. The study sought to develop subjective meanings of the perceptions of Christian school leaders (Creswell, 2014). Creswell (2014) explained that the constructivist worldview is evident in a phenomenological study "in which individuals describe their experiences" (p. 25).

Problem Statement

Harrison and Allen (2015) note the work of the school leader related to the mission and vision of the Christian school is oftentimes overshadowed by the burdens of daily routines. Other researchers observe that Christian school administrators accept the task of directing the school community toward a deeper spirituality (Harrison & Allen, 2015). With conviction and

Christian beliefs, Wyckoff (1955) contended the Christian leader and educator seeks the restoration and transformation of their own faith in Jesus Christ and those of the children, youth, and adults with whom they live and work, so they will together come to the fullness of a life in Jesus Christ. The focus of Christian leadership has been mainly on values, spirit, and soul of the leader in that the Christian leader acts out Christianity in submission to the Word as Jesus is and operates within the framework of what being a Christian means (Thom, 2000). ACSI (2016) and its affiliated schools focus on nurturing the whole child in academic, spiritual and cultural growth to become devoted followers of Jesus Christ. The ACSI mission is to provide support for Christian schools and educators for the advancement of Christian education. Leaders of Christian schools associated with ACSI are most concerned with the integration of mission and practice (Boerema, 2011). Research that gives a voice to the leadership practices perceived by Christian school leaders in fulfilling the mission of creating an environment where spiritual nurture can occur in Christian schools is missing. Therefore, the problem of this study is how Christian school leadership practices impact the creation of a school environment where spiritual nurture can occur in students of ACSI affiliated Christian schools.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand how Christian school leadership practices impact ACSI affiliated Christian schools in creating an environment where spiritual nurture can occur. For this research study, Christian school leadership practices was generally defined as responsibilities in which a principal or head of Christian school is called to be the spiritual leader with the task of directing the school community toward a deeper spirituality, development, and growth in the Christian faith (Bartsch, 2006; Harrison & Allen, 2015. The theory that guided this study was Bartsch's (2006) spiritual leadership factors. This

theory focuses on the role of the principal or head of school and Christian leadership practices

necessary for creating an environment where spiritual nurture can occur. Relative to Bartsch's

(2006) spiritual leadership factors, ACSI and their affiliated schools also focuses on leadership

competencies that prepare children and youth to grow in the knowledge and faith of Jesus Christ

as Savior and Redeemer of fallen man through spiritual nurture. Christian schools serve as an

alternative to the public school system and intentionally add a faith component and exhibit a

biblical worldview that is the foundation of their Christian educational program (Boerema,

2011).

Significance of the Study

The majority of school leadership literature is based on the public-school context and

very limited research describes the life, work and effective leadership of the K-12 Christian

school leader (Beckman, Drexler, & Eames, 2012; Harrison & Allen, 2015). Therefore, this

research study provides empirical data valuable in limited Christian school leadership literature.

Empirically, the research also filled a gap in the literature by providing qualitative data which

describes the perceptions of Christian school leadership practices in K-12 ACSI affiliated

schools.

Theoretically, the study helped Christian school administrators of ACSI affiliated schools

to communicate a phenomenon based on ACSI mission and school leadership competencies as

outlined in the Christian School Leadership Framework (CSLF). Moreover, this research helped

describe various perspectives of Christian school leadership practice within the context of

spiritual leadership as the theoretical framework of Bartsch (2006). In a theoretical context, the

study also helped develop an understanding of the role of the principal or head of school as the

spiritual leader within a community of faith context.   Harrison and Allen (2015) conducted a

study of private Christian school administrator perceptions of leadership characteristics, roles, and teacher professional development, but the importance of this study is the description of leadership practices perceived by Christian school leaders to enhance the spiritual development of students and staff within the community of faith.

Current literature discusses leadership from "varying perspectives and a shift from the past of the authoritative to a more participatory, teamwork approach" (Harrison & Allen, 2015, p. 4). In preparation and training, the study provided principals or heads of schools with a practical basis on which to consider how to deal with the various demands as a spiritual leader to create an environment where spiritual nurture can occur (Bartsch, 2006). In practice, Lawson (2006) emphasized the importance and benefits of research regarding Christian leadership approaches to nurturing the spiritual growth of children and adolescents. In addition, research to better understand the varying experiences in religious community settings such as Christian school which can impact the spiritual life of children and adolescents, is also valuable. Thus, this research is beneficial as it investigated how Christian school leadership impacts the creation of a school environment where spiritual nurture can occur in students.

Research Questions

The leaders of Christian schools affiliated with ACSI and Christian Schools International (CSI) identified topics of Christian school concern in a study by Boerema (2011). One important topic discussed by Boerema (2011) was the integration of school mission and Christian school leadership practice. In relation to Christian school leadership practice, Bartsch (2006) also emphasized the importance of understanding the principal as spiritual leader with the responsibility of developing and leading the school community of faith in a spiritually-nurturing environment. The following research questions seek to examine one of the main goals of ACSI,

which is to strengthen Christian schools and equip Christian educators to prepare, inspire and enhance the spiritual development of students in an intentionally nurturing manner.

This transcendental phenomenological study was guided by the following research questions:

RQ1. How do Christian school leaders perceive their leadership practices impact the creation of a school environment where spiritual nurture can occur in students?

Based upon research of Christian school leadership, ACSI mission, the mission of ACSI affiliated Christian schools, and competencies described in ACSI Christian School Leadership Framework (CSLF), this research question guided this study toward an understanding of how Christian school leadership practices impact the creation of a school environment where spiritual nurture can occur in students of ACSI affiliated K-12 Christian schools. The goal of this question is to provide a deep understanding of a phenomenon as experienced by several individuals (Creswell, 2014).

RQ2. How do Christian school leaders perceive their theological beliefs impact the creation of a school environment where spiritual nurture can occur in students?

Guided by Bartsch (2006), this question addresses the role of the principal in the Christian school context and theologically provides a starting point for developing an understanding of the principal or head of school as "spiritual leader" of the school community of faith based on the Holy Scriptures (p. 30). This question also helps to understand the biblical foundation on which to deal with various responsibilities of the Christian school leader and the demands placed on them or that they place on themselves (Bartsch, 2006). In essence, this question explores Christian school leadership practices based on biblical foundation and fidelity in the Holy Scriptures. According to ACSI, all affiliated schools hold to the biblical foundation,

focus on Jesus Christ, and measure all actions against the teachings of the Word of God (ACSI, 2016). The principal or head of school as spiritual leader of that community is an important part of the "vocation" or responsibility in recognizing total dependence on the Word of God in the school community of faith (Bartsch, 2006, p. 30).

RQ3. How do Christian school leaders perceive their leadership and developing the spirituality of others impacts the creation of a school environment where spiritual nurture can occur in students?

Bartsch (2006) explained that the principal or head of school may face challenges in developing spirituality within the school community which can include various individuals who have their own expressions of spirituality. Furthermore, the Christian school leader as spiritual head of the community of faith within the school is key in developing the school as it gives expression to spirituality within the Christian faith (Bartsch, 2006). This question seeks to reveal unidentified school leadership practices in leading and developing spirituality within the Christian school community.

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Definitions

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The following terms are pertinent to the study and are defined and supported by the literature used to develop the framework for the research.

1. *Christian faith* – Christian faith is the belief and understanding as reality that God is the Creator of all, the source of present life and ultimate hope. The Christian faith believer understands the Holy Bible is the Word through which God makes Himself known to humankind; sees the world as God's gift; and recognizes Jesus as God's Son and Savior of the world who has redeemed humankind from sinful nature to a divine sense of being in God through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit

(Cully, 1952). The Christian faith is also a belief that Jesus Christ, the truth of God in human life, is the Word made flesh; bringing the Word to life in a day to day loving, healing, and forgiving relationship with those in need as an example for humankind to live today in wholeness of life, body, soul, and spirit through Jesus Christ (Cully, 1952; Wyckoff, 1955).

2. *Christian nurture* – Christian nurture is the natural process of socialization and enculturation of an individual into Christian maturity with a "deep theological perspective which indicates a value system that is distinctively Christian" (Downs, 1982, p. 211).

3. *Christian spirituality* – Christian spirituality is a systematic, purposeful, and active disciplined (disciple) way of attending to the presence of God through Jesus Christ (Yust, Johnson, Sasso, & Roehlkepartain, 2006). It is a way of mind in making decisions that affect one's life structures and being in the world based on the Christian gospel of Jesus Christ (Yust et al., 2006).

4. *Community of faith* – Community of faith is defined as believers of various Christian denominations who confess a personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior toward a spiritual life where faith is crucial in shaping the community and essential to its being an integrated community of believers (Bartsch, 2006).

5. *Spiritual leadership* – Spiritual leadership encompasses distinct qualities for leadership in understanding God's will, leadership from the heart, leading with the Holy Spirit, and accountability to God (Blackaby and Blackaby, 2001).

6. *Spirituality* – Spirituality, in general meaning, is an inward connection to a supreme being and includes one's search for an ultimate purpose in life (Phipps, 2012). In a

workplace context, spirituality is a relationship with something greater than the self, a combination of the various aspects of the self, and realization of one's growth and potential (Phipps, 2012). Spirituality can also be defined as transformational, moral, and ethical self-development, authentic, meaningful, holistic, and deeper understanding of the existential self, and an internal part of one's identity which manifests itself through outward actions (Banke, Maldanado, and Lacey, 2012).

7. *Vocation* – Vocation is a doctrine which Bartsch (2006) described as the integral part of role and responsibility of the principal or head of a Christian school as spiritual leader. The vocation helps people to understand the various positions of responsibility in which the principal is called to function and gives insight into how God uses human beings to continue to create and preserve His world (Bartsch, 2006).

Summary

Chapter One provided a detailed description of this research study. Chapter One also provided a framework for the research of how Christian school leadership practices impact the creation of a school environment where spiritual nurture can occur in students. As Christian school leadership is unique in commitment of service to enhance spiritual development toward life in Jesus Christ, an overview of recent literature was discussed in this chapter. This study allowed Christian school leaders to describe their experience of a phenomenon within the social context of a Christian school environment. It is important to conduct research in the area of Christian school leadership because the principal or head of school plays an integral part in the spiritual nurture of the school community of faith (Bartsch, 2006). The literature underscores the foundation of the problem and the importance of the research study. Lawson (2006) emphasized the importance and benefits of research regarding Christian leadership in religious

community settings because of the impact on the spiritual life of children, adolescents, and adults in the community of faith. The purpose of this study was to understand how Christian school leadership practices impact the creation of a school environment where spiritual nurture can occur in students of ACSI affiliated Christian schools. This study investigated issues involved for the principal or head of the school in leading and developing spirituality within the community of the school (Bartsch, 2006).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The literature discussed in this chapter situates the research within a theoretical framework of spiritual leadership, reviews relevant literature, and identifies the gap in the literature for this qualitative, phenomenological research study. The theoretical framework that guided this study is Bartsch's (2006) spiritual leadership framework of Christian education. Christian education is spiritual nurture as it embraces a relationship among persons involved in the Christian education process to respond and interact within a divine Spirit who communicates the reality of faith and love through Jesus Christ (Rumer, 2006). Christian education leadership involves a self-conscious decision, commitment, and action on the part of the individual to accept, understand, and practice the Christian life as Jesus exemplified in the Word of God. Jesus, the ultimate example of spiritual leadership in the Christian faith, taught His disciples and followers to believe and accept the power that He displayed so that they may be endowed with the power to do the same in keeping His commandments and following in His teaching as His Father, the Almighty God commanded and yet commands in the Christian faith tradition. As Jesus expresses in John 20:21-22, "…As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you…He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (KJV). Spiritual leadership is the theoretical basis on which to contextualize Christian school leadership in this study.

Christian educators have shifted their focus on spirituality as a way to lead "rising generations" (Pazmino, 2010, p. 356) to Jesus Christ in belief and faith. With this focus on spirituality, the theoretical framework is formed in Bartsch's (2006) seven spiritual leadership practices of education. The relevant literature examines elements of spiritual leadership to show a gap in the literature and the need for this research study (Banke, Maldonado & Lacy, 2012;

Beckman, Drexler, & Eames, 2012; Blackaby & Blackaby, 2001; Bush, 2010; Csinos, 2010;

Dantley, 2003; Gibson, 2014; Harrison & Allen, 2013; Kaya, 2015; Ledesma, 2013; Nelson,

2015; Phipps, 2011; Reave, 2005). Relevant literature also discusses the competencies and

characteristics of Christian education leadership using ACSI Christian School Leadership

Framework (ACSI, 2016) constructed based on the Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPP)

Leadership Framework and Competency Model (2016) and Kouzes and Posner's (2012)

framework presented in *The Leadership Challenge*. The relevant literature on the competencies

and characteristics of Christian education leadership related to the study also showed a gap in the

literature and further support the need for this research study. The review of literature concludes

with a focused summary of the chapter.

Theoretical Framework

According to Hanna (2006), Christian leadership involves the influence of the Holy Spirit

to achieve a goal. The Christian dimension of leadership is the reference to "the influence of the

Holy Spirit" (Hanna, 2006, p. 22) sent by Jesus Christ to be a Christ-centered guide or leader.

Christian leaders are commissioned to the service of Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit. Through

Christian education, the school leader is committed to the service of Jesus Christ in enhancing

the spiritual development of others, intentionally, through nurture. Christian education and

spirituality are interrelated in the process of growing in one's relationship with God and

becoming conformed to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit (Pazmino, 2010). Pazmino

(2010) explained since the 1960s there is an "exclusive reliance upon schooling models for the

passing on of a living Christian faith" and explains the need of "attending to the spiritual roots

that alone sustain a living Christian faith and witness in the world" (p. 356). With this emphasis

on spiritual leadership, Bartsch's (2006) spiritual leadership practices drive the research study.

Bartsch's (2006) spiritual leadership framework also showed the importance of spirituality and the role of Christian school leaders in creating a school environment where spiritual nurture can occur in students.

Bartsch (2006) related Christian school leadership in the same manner as Moses dealing with the struggles of leading the children of Israel into close relationship with God, and with the laws, rituals, ceremonies and worship life given by God to ensure for them a sense of identity. Bartsch (2006) examined how Moses addressed the people before going up to the mountain to die, leaving Joshua to lead the people into the promised land of Canaan, and reminded the people of all that God had done to create them as his chosen people, thus giving them a special identity and purpose (p. 28). In the sermon, Bartsch (2006) pointed out Moses's central theme is their confession of faith and the ongoing spiritual formation of the people as stated in Deuteronomy 6:4-8:

> Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk to them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shall bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. (KJV)

Bartsch (2006) believed that the principal as leader of the Christian school also may or may not feel at times the same as Moses leading the children of Israel through the desert. Furthermore, Bartsch (2006) explained how Moses had to deal with complaints about the food and water, accusations of him not knowing where he was going, attractions of other religions,

sex, drugs, and other forbidden rituals and practices, and complaints that the rules are too tough

(p. 28). In the Lutheran perspective, the principal is the head and the school is the family, and

thus the principal is viewed as the head of the family (Bartsch, 2006). The structure of family is

used to explore the nature of the school community of faith and the relationship of the principal

to the school community of faith (Bartsch, 2006). Bartsch (2006) further explained that the

family is the fundamental God-given structure for education, "while the church has an

educational ministry to its members based on Christ's command to make disciples of all nations,

baptizing them and teaching them" as stated in Matthew 28:18-19 (p. 29). Christian education

and school leadership must embrace the spiritual dimension as all people are created as body,

soul, and spirit (Bartsch, 2006). Moreover, Wyckoff (1955) expounded on Christian education

as the reconstruction of personality toward a life in Christ where personality is characterized by

body, soul, and spirit. The mind develops purposes or motives; the spirit along with the mind

interprets the motive and the will to seek goals (Wyckoff, 1955). Through the Holy Spirit, the

person maintains a relationship with God the Creator and finds purpose in living a Christ-

centered life. For this reason, the practice of spiritual leadership is most important in Christian

education in the school community. As an integral part of the call of God to serve and nurture

others, spiritual leadership practice in Christian education community of faith, according to

Bartsch (2006) includes leading by example in undertaking, supporting teachers in theological

studies and incorporating theological considerations in decision-making in the school. In

addition, the vocation of spiritual leadership may include ensuring instruction of the Christian

faith within the school, demonstrating an attitude of service in both school and the world based

on the theology of the cross, valuing the teaching of Christian studies, providing guidance for

staff, and providing opportunities to develop aspects of spirituality through prayer and meditation (Bartsch, 2006, p. 30).

The principal or head of a Christian school is to be the spiritual leader because of the nature of the school community and is an integral part of the calling (Bartsch, 2006). As Bartsch (2006) emphasized, there are additional factors which the principal or head of the Christian school needs to enhance spiritual development of those in the school community. The spiritual leadership framework discussed in this section accounts for the existence of the phenomenon in the research study, which seeks to understand how leadership practices are perceived by Christian school leaders to create a school environment where spiritual nurture can occur in students. The focus of inquiry established by Bartsch's (2006) spiritual leadership framework, is the perceptions of Christian school leadership practices which signifies the importance of a lived experienced or phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

Related Literature

As Jesus Christ demonstrated, Christian leadership requires the Holy Spirit in the work of Christian ministry. Christ's public ministry in the Spirit is an example of understanding the person and work of Christian education and Spirit in Christian leadership. Pazmino (2010) uses several examples of Jesus' Spirit being present in his person where the power of the Holy Spirit moved in an unexpected and divine way to transform situations showing how the Holy Spirit meets human needs. Examples such as turning water into wine at a wedding and where Jesus breathed on his disciples and they received the Holy Spirit in the gospel of Jesus's post resurrection appearances shows the importance of Holy Spirit in spiritual leadership. Christian education is the spiritual formation and spiritual development "process of growing in our relationship with God and becoming conformed to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit

(Pazmino, 2010, p. 358). As Christian education seeks to shape the spiritual development of children and adolescents, the presence and power of the Holy Spirit who guides the believer into all truth, is both critical and a requisite in sustaining a relationship with Jesus Christ (Pazmino, 2010). Much of the related literature on Christian school leadership focuses on spiritual leadership elements, competencies, and characteristics, but limited research exists in the area of Christian school leadership practice. The following section discusses related literature to communicate what has been examined in relation to the research study, enhance understanding of Christian school leadership as spiritual leadership, and explain how the research filled the gap in the literature.

Christian Leadership

There is limited research that explicitly defines and discusses the nature and field of Christian leadership (Kessler & Kretzschmar, 2015). Christian leadership is only a small part of leadership studies developed by education and organizational business (Canales, 2014). In addition, Christian leadership is commonly discussed from the perspective of one or more theological disciplines such as church leadership (Kessler & Kretzschmar, 2015). Kessler and Kretzschmar (2015) suggested Christian leadership is "a person who follows Christ and whom other persons follow" (p. 2). Christian leadership can refer to leaders with responsibilities within a Christian organization that embodies a Christian purpose and leaders who offer leadership that reflects a Christian worldview while operating within a secular organization such as business companies (Kessler & Kretzschmar, 2015). For the purpose of this study Christian leadership refers to leaders with responsibilities within a Christian organization such as ACSI affiliated schools that "have a distinct identity and mission…grounded in the truth of God's revelation to us in Christ" (Dockery, 2011, p. 2). Christian leadership, according to Dockery (2011), is a

calling to provide for a Christian organization and is recognized as a unique type of leadership in service to others as Jesus Christ Himself came to serve.

According to Canales (2014) Christian leadership is connecting Jesus of Nazareth with leadership. Jesus was morally upright, ethical, charismatic, served others, attended to people's needs, motivated and inspired multitudes, spiritual, a man of prayer, a social architect, humble, empathetic, and compassionate (Canales, 2014). Thus, Christian leadership encompasses four major approaches as Jesus exemplified servant-leadership, moral leadership, spiritual leadership, and transformational leadership. Furthermore, Christian leadership, according to Canales (2014) emphasizes a conceptual and interactive influence; empowers, inspires, and motivates people to move beyond themselves to act justly and objectively; guides and challenges like a coach; is visionary, futuristic, and leads to transformation in individuals, communities, and societies; and is service in Christian discipleship.

Hanna (2006) focused on the Christian Leadership Center (CLC) model to define Christian leadership where leadership is "a dynamic relational process in which people, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, partner to achieve a common goal…which is…serving others by leading and leading others by serving" (p. 21). Christian leadership is Christ-centered, as the disciples, or followers of Christ are called Christians in Acts 11:26 which authenticates Christian leadership based on a commitment to Jesus Christ (Hanna, 2006). Furthermore, Hanna (2006) explained that there are four important elements of the CLC definition of Christian leadership: (a) the influence of the Holy Spirit; (b) the dynamic, relational, partnership process; (c) the implementation of servant-leadership; and (d) the necessity of a partnership to achieve a common goal (p. 22). In Christ-centered leadership Hanna (2006) explained there are four leader-follower synergies or collaborative interactions for those who follow the leading of the

Holy Spirit in conviction-confession, conversion-repentance, consecration-obedience, and confirmation-perseverance. Conviction-confession is the Spirit's leadership in conviction which calls for a human response in confession of sins and the truth about Jesus Christ (Hanna, 2006). In conversion-repentance, Christian leaders are made through the new birth or conversion in the Spirit, and repentance is the human response (Hanna, 2006). Likewise, consecration-obedience is sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and confirmation-perseverance highlights the purpose and process of Christ-centered and Spirit-gifted testimony of Jesus Christ which is confirmed in the follower and evident in stages of the Christian's life toward fulfilling God's divine purpose for the world (Hanna, 2006). According to Hanna (2006), Christian leaders are commissioned to operate in the divine-human synergies through the Holy Spirit. As Jesus is the "spiritual master and leader" for all to follow, Christian leaders are to emulate as spiritual leaders who exhibit Christ-like qualities such as living a moral and ethical life, demonstrating special treatment for the poor and needy, treating the disregarded of society with respect and dignity, advocating for non-violence and peace, possessing a sincere desire and dedication to please God the Father, and being people of constant prayer and meditation (Hanna, 2006, p. 34).

Christian Education Community of Faith

As the spiritual leader of the Christian school, the principal or head of the school plays a key role in developing and leading the faith community within the school (Bartsch, 2006). Bartsch (2006) explained faith is vital for all that the school is, all that the school does, and what the community of faith confesses and teaches. Christian education is a guided, nurturing process of helping growing persons to achieve at each stage of their growth such habits, skills, attitudes, appreciations, knowledge, ideas, ideals, and intentions of the nature of God and His divine will, and an understanding and practice of the reality of Christ in the life of man (Wyckoff, 1955). It

is necessary to identify and discuss the dynamics of Christian education to understand the purpose and task of the Christian faith tradition, which sets the foundation for Christian nurture. One of the goals for ACSI Christian schools is helping to shape children spiritually in an intentionally nurturing way. Cully (1952) explored the depth of the faith tradition in Christian education where God is the center. Moreover, Cully (1952) explained that theology is the science of understanding God toward an understanding of man in relation to God. In Christian faith God is everything, the source of all present life and Jesus is God's Son by whom man is redeemed. The Christian also believes, thinks, and knows the Holy Bible to be the Word of God through which God makes Himself known to man, and man develops a personal relationship with Him through Jesus Christ and the study and application of the Scriptures. In the Christian context, Cully (1952) contended man finds his freedom to the fullest, when he relates himself in God and to God. Herein lie two centers within the educational context where cultural education is anthropocentric and the education of the church is theocentric (Cully, 1952). Furthermore, Cully (1952) explained Christian education accepts the norm of American culture to some degree, but doesn't regard this "in an absolute light" (p.23). The norm for Christian education is God Himself made known in Jesus Christ and His Holy Spirit which is the central affirmation of Christianity throughout the centuries. Cully (1952) explained Christian nurture should be founded in relation to Jesus Christ whose life is witnessed to through the writings of the New Testament and the prophetic foretelling of His coming in the Old Testament. Christ's life expresses the norm in obedience to God. His death shows men the immeasurable love God has for all mankind, and His resurrection declares God's triumph over sin and evil. Christ's ascension is the promise of His everlasting reign and the gift of His Spirit assures that He is always with His people (Cully, 1952). The conceptual basis of Christian education lies in the

Word of God, the Holy Bible, and God being the center of biblical record which reveals His Holy purpose in all events (Cully, 1952). Thus, the Holy Bible is seen as the base for a living faith because God still speaks through His holy word. The Bible has an abundance of life and vitality and "a secular society still derives its principal values from those words" (Cully, 1952, p. 27). Cully (1952) contended that the Bible is treasured in the Christian community as it provides the basis for Christian nurture today.

Christian Education Experience

According to Wyckoff (1955) Christian education is the reconstruction of personality, characterized by body, soul and spirit, toward the life in Christ. In the Christian faith tradition, man is created in the image of God; thus, personality is fully understood in relation to both the earth from where man came and to God the Creator (Wyckoff, 1955). In the Bible, Genesis 2:7 reveals how God breathed the breath of life into man and man became a living soul. Man, meaning humankind, is seen as a living creature on the earth with a special relationship to God because he is created in the image of God (Wyckoff, 1955). Psalm 8:4 asks the question, "What is man, that thou are mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" (KJV). Psalm 8:5-6 declares God made man "a little lower than the angels", with a crown of glory and honor, and dominion over the works of His hands and how God "put all things under his feet". Outside of the divine Will of God, the personality of man will not achieve its fullness. According to the Christian faith, man will find purpose as he/she accepts and maintains a relationship with God the Creator of all life (Wyckoff, 1955). Man is a thinking being consisting of physical, psychological, and spiritual traits or body, soul and spirit where each part of self is in constant development because of its biological disposition, interaction of the individual constitution with a specific environment, consciousness, unconscious dynamics, conflict, tension, problems,

integration (unity, wholeness, focus, direction), and membership character or group identity

(Wyckoff, 1955). These are, according to Wyckoff (1955), the key elements in the development

of oneself: (a) definite biological features which interact with a specific environment; (b)

consciousness, which is the process of sensing, feeling, and thinking of that which is outside

ourselves and interprets it for ourselves; (c) an unconscious force involving the struggle of that

which is less than oneself, less than personal, and with tendencies of which the self is not aware;

(d) personal growth, which takes place within the realms of conflict, tension, and problem where

new experiences develop us into more capable persons; (e) integration, which is the medium of

conflict, tension, and problem in that if conflict is resolved, tensions are released, and if

problems are solved, integration of unity, wholeness, focus, and direction can take place within

the self; (f) membership character or group identity is how each individual is guided, molded,

instructed, structured, and nurtured by the life of the community; and (g) experience, which

defines the individual personality in consciously recognizing and identifying the type of

experiences that will further develop and define one's purpose. Wyckoff (1955) contended with

each new experience that the self, consciously and unconsciously interprets and gives meaning

and organization of the experience toward self-development. Through Christian education,

Wyckoff (1955) explained in becoming a Christian, the personality or self takes on a new quality

of the spirit and life purpose. Spirit can be defined as "that which is traditionally believed to be

the vital principle or animating force within living beings" and "which constitutes one's unseen

intangible being; the real sense or significance of something" (Conger, 1994, p. 64). The spirit

guides the self into reconstruction and transformation of personality toward the fullness of a new

life which suggests that developmentally, there is a sense of renewal, radical change, and the

achievement of new direction (Wyckoff, 1955). Through experience, Christian education

teaches and leads for the purpose of the reconstruction of personality toward the Christian life and living as a person in Christ with the Christian faith community and experience (Wyckoff, 1955). In the Christian experience, where one interprets and gives meaning to the experience toward Christian self-development, personality develops through the Holy Spirit, and God in Christ is the definitive reality. As spiritual nurture is one of the goals in Christian education, it is important to understand the self-development of the child and youth for the spiritual leader who is the principal or head of the school. Wyckoff (1952) explained the child is eager to explore religious and spiritual things with an attitude of wonderment and discovery. The Christian education experience must be conserved and further developed to reach Christian self-development through the experience of Christian faith (integral emotion), gaining of Christian belief, the growth in the practical Christian way of life, the expression of Christian values and meanings through worship, music, drama, speech, literature, painting, sculpture, architecture, participation in the creation of a Christian society in being concerned about the condition of social life, and more (Wyckoff, 1955). The aim of Christian education is to nurture one's life toward a life in Christ and Christian living at each level of one's experience in Christian education. Wyckoff (1955) explained when the living Christ is known and experienced, belief becomes more than intellectual acceptance, and Christian education is knowing Christ, who is the truth of God in human life, and that man will become free through wholehearted and complete acceptance and dedication to Jesus Christ as personal Savior.

Christian School Leadership

Christian leadership is unique in traditions and history as it involves "distinctive qualities which must be understood and practiced to be effective spiritual leaders" (Blackaby & Blackaby, 2001, p. 20). The Christian leader accepts the call to lead so that others will develop their faith

as the leader engages in the process of his/her own personal and Christian growth in self-understanding, skills, and in the knowledge of the faith. Moreover, the Christian leader intentionally nurtures others in their transformation and spiritual development in Christ and realizes the inward power of faith to live as Christians (Harrison & Allen, 2015). Pejza (1994) contends Christian leadership is communal, generative of new leaders, service-oriented, and transformative. Traditional views of leadership are based either on political or business models which focus on authority and power to coerce people to act in a certain way or they are fired and that moral values are not necessarily Christian. Traditional models of leadership do not serve as the basis of Christian leadership.

Christian school leadership is unique, as Blackaby and Blackaby (2001) acknowledged in the distinctive elements of spiritual leadership which includes: the task of spiritual leaders to move people to where God wants them to be; the spiritual leader's dependence on the Holy Spirit to nurture the spiritual growth in others; the high sense of accountability the spiritual leader possesses; the spiritual leader's influence on all people; and how spiritual leaders seek and work to fulfill God's will (pp. 20-23). Jesus is the "most compelling" model of spiritual leadership which Christian and secular scholars and researchers have concluded after examining and reexamining Jesus' life (Blackaby & Blackaby, 2001, p. 24). Jesus emphasized over and over the importance of spiritual understanding and spiritual development in the Holy Spirit of God, which guides believers to all truth and sustains our relationship with Jesus Christ (John 14:26; John 16:13). Canales (2014) conveyed Jesus as the spiritual master and leader for all to follow and emulate.

Spiritual Leadership

Canales (2014) suggested spiritual leadership is a new and emerging model within the field of leadership studies which focuses on motivation, inspiration, and the cultivation of one's inner life at home, school, and work. Spiritual leadership is a "calling that generates faith, hope, and altruistic love within individuals, groups or organizations which empowers followers to look forward to the future" (Canales, 2014, p. 35) and emphasizes the spiritual well-being of others. Moreover, spiritual leadership "encompasses spirit, spirituality and its relationship with religion" (Kaya, 2015). Many authors have discussed spiritual leadership, as it is believed to be one of the most important aspects of Christian education in the spiritual development of everyone in the school community (Banke, Maldonado, & Lacey, 2012). Dantley (2003) viewed spiritual leadership as being at peace with oneself and having a deep commitment and caring about the welfare and development of young learners. Moreover, Dantley (2003) contended spiritual leaders must feel free to be themselves and have confidence in sharing about themselves in self-revelations, must view those with whom they work in a positive light and must not be judgmental or critical without cause.

In relation to the research, a study of twelve Christian school leaders who are the spiritual leaders of their schools, Banke, Maldonado, and Lacy (2012) found spiritual leadership is an active, personal process for each individual. Banke et al. (2012) concluded spiritual leadership (a) sees the importance of relationship with others, (b) exhibits personal growth, (c) provides for needs and opportunities, (d) promotes personal and spiritual growth, (e) has a personal relationship with God, (f) exhibits humility, (g) is real and accessible, (h) serves as a mentor, and (i) encourages and supports all of the members of the community.

In addition, Harrison and Allen (2013) reported administrators of private Christian schools tend to focus on the importance of the vision and mission of their schools, using their spiritual leadership as influential factor in problem solving and decision making. The theoretical framework of the Harrison and Allen (2013) study was viewed on the basis of transformational leadership, servant leadership, and a teamwork approach. Transformational leadership, according to Harrison and Allen (2013) suggested that leaders attend to the needs and give attention to individual staff members, help staff members think of old problems in new ways, communicate high expectations for teachers and students, and provide a model of behavior for teachers through personal accomplishments and demonstrated character. The key principles of servant leadership are understanding the personal needs of those within the organization, healing wounds caused by conflicts within the organization, being a steward of the resources, developing the skills of those within the organization, and being an effective listener (Harrison & Allen, 2013). The teamwork model was described as collaboration of workers where everyone in the school has a role defining each individual's obligations and mutual obligations (Harrison & Allen, 2013). Christian school administrators who participated in the focus group conducted by Harrison and Allen (2013) expressed a strong commitment to Christian faith values, the development of spirituality as a goal for their students, and a strong desire to serve their school communities. Harrison and Allen (2013) concluded that the areas of school administration connected to effective leadership were sense of calling, desire to help others to grow in their relationship with God, and their desire to serve. The study of Harrison and Allen (2013) was situated within the theoretical framework of transformational leadership, servant leadership, and teamwork approach. The study was situated within the theoretical framework of spiritual leadership, which further developed an understanding on the topic of perceived Christian school

leadership practices.   Similarly to my study, Harrison and Allen (2013) examined perceptions of Christian school administrators but focused specifically on characteristics, roles, and teacher professional development. My research focused specifically on Christian school leadership practice and filled the gap that exists in this area of study.

Aspects of Spiritual Leadership

Other relevant literature discussed important aspects of spiritual leadership in relation to Christian education and Christian school leadership to show what has been examined. Bush (2010) explained spiritual leadership is described as moral leadership which includes higher order perspectives represented by a religious association. Spiritual leaders have a set of principles which serve as the basis of self-awareness inspired by spiritual power (Bush, 2010). Spiritual leadership also signifies "what engages, enlivens and enlightens the inner core of our personal approaches to leadership" (Bush, 2010, p. 402). In an interview session, Ledesma (2013) reported L. Roo McKenzie's description of spiritual leadership as grace in motion, living from a sanctified heart, knowing Christ experientially and living life in total devotion to Him 24/7, fruit-bearing without effort, and not being obsessed with outcomes.

This research is important and relevant as it examines perceived practices of Christian school leaders on the basis of spiritual leadership influenced by the Holy Spirit to lead as Jesus Christ did in His ministry of salvation and redemption of mankind. In other related research, spiritual leadership is influenced by and defined within the contexts of spiritual styles, spiritual beliefs, spiritual values, a spiritual dimension, and a faithful presence in further examining aspects of Christian school leadership.

Spiritual styles. Spirituality is defined as "a natural, common characteristic of humanity, the ways people express that capacity, and use it when experiencing transcendence" (Bellous &

Csinos, 2009, p. 213). Bellous and Csinos (2009) examined spiritual leadership as influenced by four distinct styles: (a) word-centered approach, which is based on the significance of correct words as a means of spiritual development; (b) emotion-centered approach, where emotion is at the center of one's spiritual life and experiences; (c) symbol-centered approach, which focuses on beauty in creation in God within one's heart; and (d) action-centered approach which focuses on what is done in the world, not what is said. Csinos (2010) explained "spiritual styles describe key ways in which human beings encounter God and express their inherent spirituality" (p. 3). According to Bellous and Csinos (2009) the four spiritual styles measure the way people express what they are most concerned about as they try to make meaning of life experiences. These spiritual styles, according to Bellous and Csinos (2009) create environments which nurture spiritual wholeness within the context of spirituality as a natural, common characteristic of humanity. The study includes the environments of churches, ministries, and ministry programs. In a study that focused on the lived experiences of spirituality in principal leadership, Gibson (2014) found that personal meanings of spirituality were intentionally interwoven into a range of professional tasks and linked to characteristics of servant, transformational, moral, and relational leadership styles. Spirituality, in this study, was defined as a complex and controversial human phenomenon where the meaning may be shaped and re-shaped by diverse perspectives and experiences (pp. 520-521).

Spiritual beliefs. Unlike the Christian education environment, Phipps (2011) examined spirituality and leadership in a workplace context where spirituality referred to a human desire for connection with something greater than the self, the desire for integration of the self into a meaningful whole, and the realization of one's potential. This research study focused on the influence of a leader's spiritual beliefs on strategic decision making. Spiritual belief in this study

was used to "describe the individual experience of spirituality" (Phipps, 2011, p. 179). Phipps (2012) found leaders' reasons for engaging in spirituality in the workplace was intentional and most often associated with strategic decision making in the most difficult situations.

Spiritual values. In a review of literature conducted by Reave (2005) spiritual leadership is identified as an observable phenomenon and described as the "embodiment of spiritual values such as integrity, honesty, and humility, creation of the self as an example of trustworthiness, and the demonstration of spiritual dimensions as "calling" and "membership"" (p. 663). Calling was defined as a response to an expressed need from within or from a Higher Power, and membership referred to establishing a sense of belonging and feeling understood and appreciated (Reave, 2005). Reave (2005) concluded examinations of spiritual leadership actions in spiritual organizations can be most useful in providing a model of spiritual leadership. For this reason, the research study is important and most relevant as it seeks to understand the spiritual leadership actions of Christian school leaders.

Spiritual dimension. Nelson (2015) stated "leadership frameworks from a variety of educational authorities are acknowledging the spiritual dimension" (p. 131). The spiritual dimension in school community involves understanding God's mission for the world in intentionally influencing and enriching the lives of students, staff, and other members of the school community. Dantley (2008) contended spirituality inspires creativity, inquiry, and transformative conduct and occurs because human spirits connect, underpin to dismantle marginalizing conditions, create strategies for radical change, and are the core of who we are. Dantley (2008) considered a different perspective of educational leadership involving a dimension of spirituality that is necessary to bring about societal change. Prophetic spirituality, according to Dantley (2008) is grounded in principled, pragmatic, and purposeful educational

leadership. Dantley (2008) explained principled leadership involves deeply rooted moralism which sets the standards for how schools should operate; pragmatic leadership involves leaders becoming civil rights activists and links critical thought with critical action; and purposeful leadership involves the spiritual work of "crafting possibilities when real substantive change appears to be close to nonexistent" (p. 458). Dantley (2003) explained the spiritual dimension is when problems arise that have a strong impact on other individuals directly or indirectly, such as a parent, teacher, student, administrator, or anyone associated with the schools. Spiritual dimensions are also reached when people attending a meeting can safely and freely express their concerns or views and everyone in attendance consciously, actively, and respectfully listens and has an opportunity to help in the decision-making (Dantley, 2003).

Faithful presence. Research on Christian school leadership and the particular life and work of the Christian school head is under-researched and underrepresented (Beckman, Drexler, & Eames, 2012). Beckman et al. (2012) rely on public sector models of leadership to research unique attributes and theological aspects of Christian school leadership. The focus of inquiry involved the impact of faithful presence on the academic, spiritual, and cultural outcomes of the Christian school. Faithful presence (Beckman et al., 2012) is a construct used to explain the theoretical basis of the study in examining the impact of commitment and promise of the Christian school leader. In an analysis of the study, Beckman et al. (2012) found two major themes: (a) educational leader as person, and (b) educational leader in relationship to describe the life and work of the Christian school leader within the theological context of faithful presence. Spiritual leadership in all aspects is set apart from other leadership because of the spiritual component and is an area that needs further research within a well-defined context as exemplified in this study.

Spiritual Nurture in the Christian Faith

Over many years, Christian leaders like Martin Luther and John Wesley have sought to spiritually nurture children and adolescents through established schools that would communicate the Christian faith (Stonehouse, 2006). Christian schools were formed to nurture the faith of young people through spirituality based on a biblical foundation and focus on Jesus Christ (ACSI, 2016). ACSI is committed to serving schools and educators that represent a range of evangelical, Protestant backgrounds (ACSI, 2016). Stonehouse (2006) and Lawson (2006) explain the elements of spirituality necessary for the spiritual nurture of children and youth in the Protestant and evangelical Christian faith traditions.

Protestant Christian faith. As human beings are created in the image of God, who is a Spirit and a trinity of persons Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, children and youth as well as adults are spiritual beings created in communion and connection with God and other human beings (Stonehouse, 2006). Stonehouse (2006) explained the spiritual potential of children, citing Mark 10:14-16 where Jesus affirmed children, saying "for of such is the kingdom of God" and "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." In verse 16, Jesus took the children "up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them" (KJV). Insomuch as children are welcomed in Jesus' name, Stonehouse (2006) contended, we are welcoming children on behalf of Jesus who blesses those who welcome them and warns of punishment to those who cause them to err. Spirituality in the Protestant Christian faith is understood within the same biblical concepts where the spiritual life of the whole person is in relationship with God, the Father, Jesus, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Stonehouse, 2006). According to Stonehouse (2006) Christian spirituality emphasizes a growing love relationship with God and the love and service of others in becoming more like Jesus Christ. This growing

love relationship is described by Stonehouse (2006) as the spiritual journey where children and adolescents are nurtured by adults walking with them, encouraging their responses, guiding them around dangers, and enjoying the wonder and awe of knowing God on the journey.

Stonehouse (2006) explains there are three critical elements for understanding spirituality in the spiritual journey of children and adolescents. The first element is the child's great spiritual potential affirmed by Jesus Christ as discussed in the above paragraph. Stonehouse (2006) explained children are born spiritual beings who Jesus values and presents as examples for adults to follow "for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 19:14, KJV).

The second is the reality of sin where Adam and Eve, being the first man and woman, created in perfect communion with God and each other, broke the union and sinned by disobeying God. As a result, all humankind is born into sin which can possibly consume one's life into a world of brokenness and harm to the spirit (Stonehouse, 2006). Romans 5:19 says, "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (KJV). Romans 5:17 explains how by one, Jesus Christ, the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness shall reign in the lives of many (KJV). Stonehouse (2006) contended (a) the child's spirituality should include a solid and biblically-informed understanding of a child being fully human and made in the image and likeness of God, yet still developing and in need of instruction and guidance in the gift of love in Jesus Christ; (b) children are gifts of God yet can be selfish and sinful in their actions; and (c) children are metaphors of immature faith and childish behavior, yet as Jesus affirms, positive examples of faith and complete trust in God. Ignoring issues of sin in the spirituality of children can lead to parenting and religious instruction that can damage children (Stonehouse, 2006).

The third critical element in understanding a child's spiritual journey and growth is grace, which is defined by Stonehouse (2006) as the "unmerited love of God that seeks to draw us into relationship with God's self" (p. 99). Stonehouse (2006) explained the love of God drawing the child toward a relationship with Him before the child consciously calls out to God is the prevenient grace that is active from the beginning of life through childhood, adolescence, and adulthood until he/she responds to God's love. This aspect of the spiritual journey is described as divine-human interaction where God awaits the response of the person to commune with Him by living a life in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit (Stonehouse, 2006).

The spiritual journey includes a process of spiritual growth which begins during the first years of life when a child constructs an understanding of God from relationships with parents and other adults who are significant, what they have heard and learned about God, and faith rituals, sacraments, and services they have experienced (Stonehouse, 2006). A child's first concept of God is very important, according to Stonehouse (2006), as first images and initial understanding of God and response to God have a lasting effect on the person throughout adolescence and into adulthood. For example, Stonehouse (2006) explained if a child learns of God as loving, trusting, and dependable, this initial understanding can influence and help a person love and respond to God throughout life, or if the child experiences from adult comments or teaching about God's displeasure with the child, this image can hinder the person from trusting God and embracing the love of God throughout life.

Spiritual growth within adolescence includes developmental changes in examining the faith of childhood and examining the meaning of life and understanding of God through questions within the adolescent and surrounding culture which may challenge their faith (Stonehouse, 2006). As adolescents experience growth in knowledge of God and God's ways,

they may respond to faith challenges in various ways. They may have: (a) a critical examination

of their faith and own it; (b) a critical examination of their faith and disown it; (c) accept and

follow the faith set by parents or another person of authority and choosing not to critically

examine their faith for themselves; or (d) a critical examination of their faith without deciding to

own or disown it (Stonehouse, 2006). For the spiritual leader, a child's faith and relationship

with God are very important aspects in the spiritual nurture of children, particularly as he/she

begins a lifelong journey with God.

   Evangelical Christian faith. Lawson (2006) explained the evangelical movement in the

Christian faith is not limited to one denomination, group, or single theological tradition, but is

characterized by theological distinctives. According to Lawson (2006) one theological

distinctive is acceptance of the Christian Scriptures as God's divinely-inspired revelation to

humankind and inerrant in all they affirm, viewed as God's authoritative Word for faith and life,

and central to the Christian education process. Another theological distinctive Lawson (2006)

explains is the affirmation of Christian doctrines that focus on Jesus Christ as God incarnate, His

redemptive work for humankind through His death and resurrection, and on the need for

salvation by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone, and the call to Evangelism as the

atoning work of Jesus Christ as one critical characteristic of evangelical preaching, teaching, and

teaching directed to children. With an emphasis on spiritual growth, Lawson (2006) further

explains another theological distinctive is the transformation of character, attitudes, and actions

into the image of Jesus Christ by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit working in the lives of people.

Based on these theological foundations, Evangelical Christian spirituality begins with God's

grace in drawing us to faith in Jesus Christ so that we are cleansed within from sinful nature and

renewed inwardly by salvation in Jesus Christ received through faith. This renewal "results in

being in right relationship with God," enabling true spiritual growth as God's Holy Spirit transforms people over time into the image of God (Lawson, 2006, p. 110). Spiritual transformation is reconciliation with God and new relationships with others characterized by love and forgiveness (Lawson, 2006). Spirituality in the Evangelical faith considers God's redemptive work in us to be of utmost importance in growth of a meaningful spiritual life. Lawson (2006) described regeneration by God through the Holy Spirit as "conversion" of people followed by transformation into the image of God (p. 110). Lawson (2006) emphasized understanding conversion experience helps increase understanding of human spirituality and the spiritual nurture of children.

Evangelical Christian faith draws on biblical examples and theological affirmations regarding the spiritual state of children and how God's redemptive work of conversion is understood to occur (Lawson, 2006). Furthermore, Lawson (2006) explained Evangelical Christians view children's human condition as the same as adults, sinful by nature in separation from God and spiritually dead, which has resulted in two approaches to children's ministry, baptism for regeneration and child evangelism at an early age. The spiritual status of children also includes: children of Christians viewed as members of the covenant community of God's people, children viewed as innocent of any guilt of sin until the age of accountability, children viewed as sinful but under God's grace until the age of discretion or accountability, and children viewed as needing to be led to right relationship to God (Lawson, 2006). Furthermore, children need to be led in right relationship to God, according to Lawson (2006), through three major approaches: (a) spiritual nurture approach, which views children already in relationship with God through grace in infancy; (b) conversionist approach in helping children seek a conscious conversion; and (c) combined approach focusing on instruction and nurture in the Christian faith.

Lawson (2006) contended the primary time of conversion or of coming to faith in Jesus Christ is the first two decades of life. Moreover, Lawson (2006) described three dominant types of conversion experiences in the lives of Christian children as (a) sudden conversion which occurs in a short period of time as a conscious experience followed by an intense emotional response such as the conversion experience of Saul of Tarsus in the Acts of the Apostles; (b) gradual conversion which is the most common in Christianity, are a series of encounters with God and an awareness of God over a period of time toward acceptance of the gospel; and (c) unconscious conversion which is described as individuals who always felt they were Christians and no recollection of how or when they became a member of the Christian faith.

Lawson (2006) suggested Christian leaders who are responsible for the conversion and spiritual nurture of children and adolescents, need to consider the following principles to nurture children toward Christian faith commitment: (a) instruct and nurture children to want to know and be in right relationship with God before sharing the gospel with them; (b) avoid pressuring children and rely on God's work through the Scripture and the Holy Spirit; (c) avoid public invitations and use private conversations with children and youth who would like to respond to the gospel, and encourage pure motives and accountability to God, not people; (d) provide ongoing nurture and instruction to children who profess faith in Jesus Christ, to ensure spiritual growth; and (e) provide various opportunities for adolescents to reexamine their faith which they have been taught, to ensure they understand and own it, freely and personally.

Spiritual Nurture in Christian School Environment

Rumer (2006) stated "Christian education is spiritual nurture as it is training in spiritual relationship through spiritual relationship" (p. 447). Rumer's (2006) philosophy of Christian education is the spiritual teaching-learning process which involves a divine-human partnership

where people respond to the Spirit-presence of God, through Jesus Christ with love. Christian

education is also education into "discipleship to Jesus Christ" and the "learner's commitment to

the Word incarnate in Jesus" (Rumer, 2006, p. 443). Ledesma (2013) reported L. Roo

McKenzie's view of a spiritually led school is an environment where God is given the priority in

daily activities, where students are clear about the priority of their spiritual development, and

where students see spiritual values being exemplified by the staff.   A spiritually led school is

also where faculty and staff members who are truly converted at heart understand their primary

role is teaching to lead students into a loving relationship with Christ through modeling a Christ-

centered lifestyle publicly and privately and where spiritual faculty relate to students and to each

other with grace, compassion, kindness, and patience (Ledesma, 2013). A spiritually led school

also an environment where all stakeholders, school leaders, families, teachers, board members,

students, and constituents feel the pulse of the Spirit in everything that happens in relation to the

school and where the peace of Jesus Christ reigns supremely in fruits of the Spirit, love, joy,

peace, kindness, grace, patience, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control in everyone (Ledesma,

2013).

Jankiewicz and Jankiewicz (2016) discussed Bushnell's emphasis on nurture and

character development within an environment that favored emotional experience and conversion.

According to Jankiewicz and Jankiewicz (2016), Bushnell confirmed that children's nurture of

soul and character should begin when nurture of the body begins and religious instruction should

be adjusted to the age and capacity of each individual child. Christian doctrine and experience,

according to Bushnell, should begin with infantile nurture and in time progress to a child's

nurture and then a youth's nurture according to stages of growth (Jankiewicz & Jankiewicz,

2016). Bushnell argued the true idea of Christian education is that the child should grow up a

Christian and never know himself/herself as being otherwise (Jankiewicz & Jankiewicz, 2016).

According to Jankiewicz and Jankiewicz (2016), Bushnell emphasized parental teaching as the

most powerful contribution to the faith formation of children and the role of the family as an

instrument of God's grace to children. Recognizing the importance of parental instruction in the

Christian faith formation of children, ACSI is committed to assisting parents in their child's

Christian faith development through an intentional and nurturing Christian education (ACSI,

2016).

Dantley (2003) contended some school experiences which may be spiritual are: inspiring

a student to voluntarily help someone in need; comforting a student or staff in a time of

bereavement for a close friend or relative; encouraging students to visit a sick classmate at home

or hospital; attending wakes, memorial and funeral services of colleagues, parents, and students;

celebrating those who receive promotions to new positions or retirement; food distribution

projects for those in need; voluntary work in food banks or food kitchens; and acknowledging

and respecting differences of others.

Christian Spirituality and Nurture

Christian spirituality involves being in relationship with God by making critical choices

to turn away from sin and accept Jesus Christ and by responses of love to God in entering a new

relationship with God through Jesus Christ along the spiritual journey (Stonehouse, 2006).

Nurturing the spiritual life, according to Stonehouse (2006) includes the following: (a) giving

children the language of faith keeps the experience of God alive where others also affirm its

reality and confess their faith and confirm vows of love and intention to continue in relationship

with God through Jesus Christ; (b) knowledge of God through Scriptures and narratives helps

children make sense of life and connect with the reality of God and God's ways, both naturally

and affectively; (c) embrace by a Christian faith community through experiences in prayer and worship, and other faith practices; full participation in the faith community creates a sense of belonging and identity; allowing children and adolescents a safe and supportive environment to ask and process question about faith and life; a place to experience love and learn to love and serve others; and structures and programs for spiritual nurture in the faith to children and adolescents.

Bartsch (2006) explained that spirituality develops as it is lived, practiced, and experienced with opportunities for individuals to spend time in prayer and meditation. As "today's greatest megatrend," spirituality is a necessary part of Christian leadership that is based on Jesus Christ, who is more than a great spiritual leader (Banke, Maldanado, & Lacey, 2012, p. 237). In researching, I found that spirituality has various definitions such as one's identity; the heart's longing for greater meaning in life and work; a yearning for personal fulfillment of comfort and happiness; an expression of service; a yearning for a deeper connection to a life more valuable than money or even power, or a driving force that produces quality and enhances learning and employee psychological well-being (Banke et al., 2012). Stokley (2002) contended spirituality is not only a challenge in defining but is also mysterious as it defies concise meaning. Spirituality is also defined as a deep commitment to the welfare and development of young learners, some understanding of the world which guides us in our daily lives, or powerful human life encounters of spiritual experiences described as the conscious recognition of a connection beyond our minds or emotions which may leave us astonished (Dantley, 2003). Moreover, Dantley (2003) explained spirituality in various ways: (a) that part of our lives and community through which we make meaning and understand our world; (b) the spiritual dimension of humankind which gives motivation and inspiration as well as the technique of reading the world

through personal critical awareness of ourselves; (c) the foundation for the values and principles that inform our personal and professional behavior; and (d) what allows us to create the projects of transformation from present existence to future hopes and dreams yet to come.

ACSI Christian School Leadership Competencies

Over four million students in the United States attend religious schools, which encompass various educational and religious philosophies due to vast denominations also in the U.S. When several U.S. school associations joined in a united voice for the advancement of Christian education excellence, they formed ACSI (ACSI, 2016) which is one of the largest Protestant Christian education associations rooted in a Christian philosophy of education, the eternal Word of God as revealed in Scripture and in creation, and the concept of redemptive teaching. ACSI believes a Christ-centered education teaches God's Word as the moral authority, which informs all intellectual, spiritual, social, and physical pursuits in accord with God's creational law (ACSI, 2016). According to ACSI mission and vision, Christian schools and Christian educators are trained and supported in providing effective teaching and learning that is biblically sound, academically rigorous, socially engaged, and culturally relevant and who embody a biblical worldview, engage in transformational teaching and discipleship, and embrace personal and professional growth (ACSI, 2016). ACSI organization believes Christian schools exist to assist parents in fulfilling their biblical responsibility to educate children within a framework based on five essential elements: truth, intellectual development, Christian educators, potential in Christ, and operational integrity (ACSI, 2016). As ACSI governs approximately 24,000 schools in more than 100 countries, the association is committed to biblical fidelity and prayer, biblical foundation and focus on Jesus Christ, the members they serve, stewardship, diverse worldwide constituency, staff and their growth, and public engagement. ACSI association is committed to

studying in the Holy Scriptures and individual and corporate prayer; ensuring association actions, programs, and resources are aligned with teachings of the Word of God; recognizing a total dependence on God; biblical foundation and focus on Jesus Christ; commitment to represent a range of evangelical, Protestant backgrounds; and upholding ACSI Statement of Faith of the Bible as the inspired and infallible Word of God speaking with absolute authority regarding the proper conduct of mankind and the unchanging foundation for all belief and behavior (ACSI, 2016). In addition, as a Christian education association, ACSI is dedicated to bringing maximum benefit to member schools and educators as resources including time and finances. They embody a commitment to stewardship with acts of faithfulness and integrity in program administration and in the production of resources with fiscal accountability. ACSI is also dedicated to the realization that the organization belongs to God and ultimately is accountable to Him for all that He has entrusted to the care of ACSI (ACSI, 2016). ACSI promotes international, national, and regional organizational leadership to help all member schools and is committed to using the knowledge and insights of colleagues from around the world regardless of gender, ethnicity, age, or cultural differences (ACSI, 2016). Furthermore, ACSI is dedicated to (a) establishing personnel resources and organizational policies and practices that encourage equitable and competitive wages and support for professional growth, (b) commitment to collaborative goal setting, accountability, and evaluation systems, (c) public engagement in working together with parents and families, churches, governments and other leaders in school compliance, and protecting the rights of parents to choose the educational program that best meets the educational and spiritual needs of their child (ACSI, 2016).

ACSI (ACSI, 2016) explains leadership effectiveness is the most important aspect of organizational effectiveness, and although literature on leadership is growing rapidly, there is

little consensus around leadership meaning. Thus, a group of Christian school leaders affiliated

with ACSI developed a research-based comprehensive leadership framework which outlines and

describes the "competencies and behaviors considered most important to the performance of

heads of Christian schools" in the Christian School Leadership Framework (CSLF, p. 1). ACSI

explained that the CSLF is constructed on three major categories. The first category is

Leadership from the Heart which begins with commitment of the heart to Jesus Christ as Savior

and Lord of all, calling to discipleship, character representing Christ, and natural chemistry of

personality and ability, which are all within the realm of biblical thought and action or lens to

view all aspects of Christian school and leadership. The second category is identified as

Relational Competencies that require knowledge, skills, and character qualities in working with

others to build relationships through self-awareness, communication, cultural competence and

encouraging the heart; leading people through an inspired and shared vision, team building,

developing people, and leading the board; and driving results through performance reviews,

planning and execution, decision making, and challenging the process. The third category is

described as Strategic Competencies which requires knowledge of instructional leadership in

professional development culture, innovation and technology, student development and spiritual

formation, and curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Strategic Competencies also requires

advancement leadership in developing the profile of the school, recruiting and maintaining

students, marketing, and funding; and operational leadership through financial management,

operations management, technology planning and management, and strategic financial planning.

The Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) which began in 1994, is an educational

association of charter schools which focuses on high-quality college preparatory instruction

(KIPP, 2016). KIPP serves as the model for which CSLF was formed and operates based on

five principles called the Five Pillars: (a) high expectations, choice and commitment to uphold the principles; (b) more time in extended day, week, and year; (c) power to lead in effective academic and organizational leadership; (d) focus on results of high student academic performance; and (e) commitment to excellence in a partnership with parents, teachers, students and other stakeholders (KIPP, 2016). Three competencies or key elements of the CSLF come from the Five Practices derived from research of Kouzes and Posner (2012) in *The Leadership Challenge* which are (a) Inspire a Shared Vision, (b) Encourage the Heart, and (c) Challenge the Process. The other two practices are built into the CSLF competencies but are not labeled. Although Kouzes and Posner's (2012) Five Practices of leadership are evidenced from research, the experiences are not examples of Christian school leadership, which has distinctive qualities in the commitment to Jesus Christ and based on the biblical worldview. As with the CSLF, the KIPP framework is a "cluster of related knowledge, skills (characteristics) and attitudes that affects a major part of one's job" but do not describe or identify specific administrative practices where spiritual nurture can occur in students of Christian schools (ACSI, 2014, p. 1).

Summary

Christian leadership is unique in traditions and history as it involves "distinctive qualities which must be understood and practiced" (Blackaby & Blackaby, 2001, p. 20) to be effective spiritual leaders. The Christian leader accepts the call to lead so that others will develop their faith as the leader engages in the process of his/her own personal and Christian growth in self-understanding, skills, and in the knowledge of the faith. Moreover, the Christian leader intentionally nurtures others in their transformation and spiritual development in Christ and realizes the inward power of faith to live as Christians. Pejza (1994) contended Christian leadership is communal, generative of new leaders, service-oriented, and transformative.

Traditional views of leadership are based either on political or business models which focus on authority and power to coerce people to act in a certain way or they are fired. Given this view, some believe that moral values are not necessarily Christian. Traditional models of leadership do not serve as the basis of Christian school leadership. The literature review outlined the theoretical framework of spiritual leadership, which is an important process in fulfilling the Christian school mission and vision. In addition, the elements, competencies, and characteristics of Christian school leadership provided evidence of a gap in literature for the research study. More qualitative research is needed to understand how Christian school leadership practices are perceived to create an environment where spiritual nurture can occur, and my study seeks to address this gap in the literature.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand how leadership practices are perceived by Christian school leaders to impact the creation of a school environment where spiritual nurture can occur in students of ACSI affiliated Christian schools. Chapter Three provides important information about the methods of the research study. The chapter begins with a discussion of the design, re-states the research questions, and describes the setting and participants who were involved in the research study. In addition, the chapter continues with an examination of the procedures, the role of the researcher, and an explanation of data collection and analysis strategies. Lastly, this chapter discusses the trustworthiness and ethical considerations of the research study. The chapter concludes with a summary of the qualitative research methods used which helps to understand how my study was conducted.

Design

This research was a qualitative study with a transcendental phenomenological approach to investigate how Christian school leadership practices are perceived to impact the creation of a school environment where spiritual nurture can occur in students. The study is qualitative in its design, its approach to inquiry, and the characteristics that define the study as qualitative research (Creswell, 2014). This study used a transcendental phenomenological approach because it "describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon" (Creswell, 2014, p. 75). This phenomenological research design was also appropriate for data collection and data analysis procedures which involved collecting data through criterion sampling from individuals who have experienced the phenomenon and the development of a detailed description of what all the individuals experienced and how they

experienced it (Creswell, 2014). For this reason, the phenomenological approach was also selected because it is important to capture the essence of the experience which "is the culminating aspect of a phenomenological study" (Creswell, 2014, p. 77).

Moustakas (1994) contended phenomenology was technically defined by Hegel who explained phenomenology, in reference to knowledge as it appears to one's consciousness, insomuch as knowledge is the "science of describing what one perceives, senses, and knows in one's immediate awareness and experience" (p. 26). Moreover, Creswell (2014) explained phenomenology has a strong philosophical component as it appeals mostly on the writings of Edmund Husserl, a German mathematician, and others like Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty who have extended his views. Although various writers and scholars including Moustakas (1994) point to different philosophical reasoning for the use of phenomenology, Creswell (2014) explained there exists, in all of these perspectives, the common philosophical assumption of "the study of the lived experiences of persons, the view that these experiences are conscious ones, and the development of the descriptions of the essences of these experiences" (p. 75).

The type of phenomenology that was used in this study is transcendental "in which everything is perceived freshly, as if for the first time" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 34). The primary focus of this transcendental phenomenology was not my interpretations, but the perceptions of the Christian school leaders and the description of each participant's experience within the framework of their specific school and position (Creswell, 2014). A transcendental phenomenological approach in the research allowed a composite description of the essence of the experience using Moustakas's (1994) four essential steps in the process of exploring the phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). What is perceived and what appears of value for each participant was transformed into meaning and the extension of knowledge (Moustakas, 1994).

Moustakas's (1994) transcendental phenomenological approach was also used mainly because it is systematic in the data analysis procedure and provides guidelines for developing the descriptions, constructing meaning, and conveying the overall essence of the experience (Creswell, 2014). The first step in transcendental phenomenology for this study was *epoche* or "bracketing" out my description of the experience to examine the phenomenon with a new or "fresh" perspective (Creswell, 2013, p. 80). This step was a prerequisite before moving forward to collecting data from the participants who have experienced the phenomenon so that the researcher moved beyond any everyday understandings, judgments, and knowledge, into a "pure ego" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 34). Christian school leadership is unique in characteristics, beliefs, styles, and practices, which required preconceptions or prejudgments about the phenomenon to be set aside. The next step in transcendental phenomenology included analyzing the data by reducing participants' statements or quotes into themes and developing a thick description of the experience (Creswell, 2014). The concept or experience of individuals varied with each specific perspective, which provided a detailed understanding of the individual in his or her social context and provided a collective phenomenon (Henriques, 2014). The fourth step in the process of the research study involved constructing meaning and conveying the essence of the experiences based on the thick textural and structural descriptions of the participants (Creswell, 2014).

Research Questions

This phenomenological study was guided by the following research questions:

Research Question One

How do Christian school leaders perceive their leadership practices impact the creation of a school environment where spiritual nurture can occur in students?

Research Question Two

How do Christian school leaders perceive their theological beliefs impact the creation of a school environment where spiritual nurture can occur in students?

Research Question Three

How do Christian school leaders perceive their leading and developing the spirituality of others impacts the creation of a school environment where spiritual nurture can occur in students?

Setting

One of the major goals of ACSI is to promote and support effective Christian school leadership to enhance children's spiritual development, intentionally through nurture in Christian schools (ACSI, 2016). The setting included various ACSI Christian schools located in the state of Pennsylvania identified using an open web search of ACSI affiliated schools. ACSI Christian schools embody its mission, vision, and goals "to enhance children's spiritual development in an intentional, nurturing manner…to help children grow spiritually, academically, and culturally" (ACSI, 2016). An open web search identified the Christian schools in Pennsylvania affiliated with ACSI, which includes an ACSI member or accredited school. As a long-time resident of Pennsylvania, my topic is of personal significance as I endeavor to become a Christian school leader in Pennsylvania. Identified ACSI affiliated schools ranged in grade level from early education through high school. The identified ACSI affiliated Christian schools in Pennsylvania varied in enrollment from 31 to 450 total student population. Many of ACSI accredited or member Christian schools in Pennsylvania also hold other accreditations such as Middle States Association (MSA) and Christian Schools International (CSI). The school organizational structures varied among the Christian schools that were used in this research study. Some

organizational structures of the Christian schools include a board of directors which govern the school policies and procedures collaboratively with the principal or head of school. Several of the Christian schools are led by the principal or head of school who oversees the administrative and educational program. Next in the organizational structure in most of the Christian schools is the administrative team, which varied among schools, but may include an assistant principal, executive director, or other directors, such as director of operations and marketing, administrative assistant, or finance director. Some of the Christian school leaders hold dual roles as administrator and/or teacher. Pseudonyms were used for both individuals and schools to protect the confidentiality of the respondents.

Participants

In locating and selecting the research participants, Moustakas (1994) contended it is essential that each research participant has experienced the phenomenon and agrees to participate. Therefore, my study focused on the principal, administrator, or school leader of an ACSI affiliated school, which includes accredited and/or member Christian school in Pennsylvania. The sample included individuals who have experienced the phenomenon of Christian school leadership practices perceived to impact the creation of a school environment where spiritual nurture can occur in students. Each participant currently served in a Christian school leadership position at an ACSI affiliated Christian school in Pennsylvania. The sample size included 11 participants. The Christian school leaders were willing to participate in a one-on-one interview, submit documents as artifacts to clarify their leadership practices, and one focus group session.

In a phenomenological study, "criterion sampling works well when all individuals studied, represent people who have experienced the phenomenon" (Creswell, 2014, p. 157). In

addition, the most popular sampling approach in qualitative research, and the strategy that is most appropriate for this study is maximum variation sampling as some Christian schools differentiate in student enrollment, grade levels, and organizational structures that reflected differences in perspectives (Creswell, 2014). Creswell (2014) explains, a phenomenological "approach is often selected because when a researcher maximizes differences at the beginning of the study, it increases the likelihood that the findings will reflect differences or different perspectives—an ideal in qualitative research" (p. 158).

Procedures

The preliminary procedures in completing this study involved passing the dissertation prospectus and the development of a dissertation research proposal during the EDUC 989 course. Following submission, successful defense and approval of my research proposal, I submitted the preliminary IRB forms for approval to begin data collection. The first step of the research study following the successful defense was to obtain approval from the International Review Board (IRB) of Liberty University to conduct research and obtain access to the setting and participants (see Appendix A). To obtain approval of recruiting participants from ACSI accredited and/or member schools, I also completed and submitted the ACSI Graduate Student Research Proposal (see Appendix B). After confirmation that the research study was approved by ACSI and the IRB of Liberty University, the ACSI Marketing Department sent an email invitation to their Pennsylvania accredited and member schools, which included an introductory letter from ACSI along with my recruitment email and IRB approval letter as attachments. I felt it necessary to also conduct an open web search of ACSI affiliated schools in PA to implement follow up recruiting steps in obtaining individuals to participate. Through criterion sampling of ACSI affiliated schools, I identified and contacted Christian school leaders via an initial email

explaining the research study in-depth and requested their participation in the study (see

Appendix C). Study participants were informed of the motivation for their selection, granted

anonymity, and provided the purpose of the study which helped to build rapport (Creswell,

2014). The research material was only accessible by me through a registered email account and

logging in using a secured username and password I created. This ensured privacy for the

participant's responses.

A criterion sampling of Christian school leaders identified ACSI affiliated schools in

Pennsylvania based on the open web search. Christian school leaders in Pennsylvania were

initially contacted via email to participate in the study. Consent forms were emailed as an

attachment in the process of criterion sampling for participants to provide permission to

participate (see Appendix D). Two to three days following the initial contact via email, I

followed up with a phone call to recruit and confirm participants. Individuals who agreed to

participate were given instructions to sign and email the consent form to me. After consent

forms were received I scheduled a telephone interview with each participant. I conducted each

interview using open-ended questions to collect data. The participants were required to provide

a pseudonym for the school leader's name and school name or for any identifiable information.

The responses of the participants were transcribed verbatim. The data collected was analyzed

according to the transcendental phenomenological method established for the interview data.

Furthermore, data collection for this study was obtained also from documents used as artifacts

such as official memos, meeting minutes, written procedures and policies, and a focus group

session transcribed for data analysis.

Interviews for the research involved using open-ended questions to gain an understanding

of the phenomenon of the study, how Christian school leadership practices impact the creation of

a school environment where spiritual nurture can occur in students. The participants were Christian school leaders who are currently serving in leadership roles at ACSI Christian schools. Initial contact of the participants was made via email correspondence to introduce the study. I followed up with a telephone contact to confirm receipt of email request and individual participation in the study. For the individual interviews, the participants were encouraged to choose a location that is free of distraction for the purpose of clear audio recording. My interview setting was a quiet home office with no distractions.

By collecting different sources of evidence, the phenomenological study was strengthened and provided deep reflection on the discussed topics (Creswell, 2014). The research study also used different methods for collecting data to provide corroborating evidence and validity to the findings, as recommended by Creswell (2014). I collected documents for analysis as Christian school leadership practices were shown in written forms and the presentation of specific documented leadership practices. Participants had the option of providing documents as additional information in clarifying their role, responsibilities, and school leadership practices as spiritual leaders in school community of faith. As Creswell (2014) suggested in a phenomenological study, multiple forms of data collection are recommended so that the researcher can build an in-depth picture and description of the phenomenon. I conducted a focus group session to gain additional information (see Appendix E). The use of audio recording was necessary in order to transcribe the focus group conversation. Participants were informed of the audio recording of the focus group session in the request email. After participant's agreement to participate in the study was received, I conducted the focus group session using Free Conference Call.com to host the session as an audio conference. The date and time of the session was arranged with each of the participants as well as contact information which included the dial in

number and access code was provided for the participants to join the session. I used focus group questions to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon (See Appendix E).

Data analysis began with a full description of my own experience of the phenomenon as the researcher, to set aside personal experiences and focus on the participants who have experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). The next step involved carefully reading, rereading and transcribing the data from recorded interviews, documents, and an audiotaped focus group session. While reading all of the transcribed data, I highlighted noteworthy quotes and made margin notes to form a short length of initial codes of 25 categories of information which were combined into five or six themes that were used to write a final narrative (Creswell, 2014). The final narrative included a composite description of what the participants in the study experienced and how the experience happened within the setting and context of each ACSI affiliated Christian school leadership experience. Triangulation of data collection and data analysis spiral activities helped to validate interviews, documents, and focus groups in the research. Triangulation is recommended as it involves "corroborating evidence from different sources to shed light on a theme or perspective" (Creswell, 2014, p. 251). In analyzing the data, it is important to provide rich, textual description of what happened and structural description of how the phenomenon was experienced by the participants. The use of multiple data collection strategies helped to establish different perspectives of the phenomenon which helped to avoid ethical issue of falsifying evidence, data, findings, or conclusions.

The Researcher's Role

The process of transcendental phenomenology in qualitative research helped me to understand the importance of my role as researcher. Moustakas (1994) explains how the key concepts in transcendental phenomenology helps researchers "facilitate derivation of

knowledge" toward meaning and understanding of the phenomenon or experience being investigated (pp. 33, 36). Intentionality is a key concept which involves first recognizing that the "self and world are inseparable components of meaning" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 28). It is the responsibility of the researcher to be intentional through openness and directness toward participants in intent and purpose of the study throughout the research and data collection process. As the key instrument of the research study, it was important to be open and honest with participants in disclosing the purpose of the study. In addition, it was important as a key instrument in creating and utilizing my own open-ended questions based on Bartsch's (2006) seven spiritual leadership practices. It was also imperative to proceed with integrity, employing valuable research skills, and conducting the study with fidelity. In order to conduct a phenomenological study, the researcher should be able to set aside personal experiences to focus solely on the participants in the study (Moustakas, 1994; Creswell, 2013).

Another reason why transcendental phenomenology was used in this study, is the strategy of inter-subjectivity, another key concept involving a "connection with self-insights and subjective perceptions of what is real" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 37). My role as the researcher was to "experience the world…not as my private synthetic formation but as other than mine alone, as an intersubjective world…my experience of others' experience" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 37). I am currently the assistant principal of an elementary urban public-school in Pennsylvania with many years of experience as an educator in the same public-school system at various levels, including elementary and middle schools. My religious affiliation is with a Christian church organization and disciple ministry. As the ninth child in a family of ten siblings with six brothers and three sisters, I grew up in the inner city and attended the neighborhood public-schools from kindergarten through high school. Currently, I am not affiliated with a specific faith, tradition, or

denomination. My faith, values, and belief systems are grounded in the biblical worldview and nondenominational, which means no particular religious tradition. I strongly believe in Christian education toward the growth and development of the whole of man through Jesus Christ, Savior of mankind and guided by the Holy Spirit for life in Christ. The Christian development of the whole being includes one's mind, body, soul, and spirit. In addition, I do not have any personal or professional relationships with any of the participants in the study. I do realize that my *epoch* began by setting aside any preconceived notions or judgments regarding leadership and/or administrative practices in a public-school setting to view Christian school leadership practices with a fresh and new perspective. Phenomenology, according to Moustakas (1994) is "step by step attempts to eliminate everything that represents a prejudgment, setting aside presuppositions, and reading a transcendental state of freshness and openness" (p. 41). To minimize any biased procedures, I depended on current literature and apply a transcendental phenomenological process to guide data analysis in the research study.

<div align="center">**Data Collection**</div>

Data for this study were collected from interviews, documents, and one focus group session.

Interviews

According to Creswell (2014) the "telephone interview provides the best source of information when the researcher does not have direct access to individuals" (p. 164). In a phenomenological study, interviews are the primary approach for data collection with as many as 11 individuals (Creswell, 2014). Each telephone interview in my study was on speaker mode and audio recorded using an iPad app called Livescribe. Livescribe allowed me to write participant's responses in a notebook while recording the audio of the interview. The interview

questions were grounded in the research literature and were formed based on Bartsch's (2006) spiritual leadership practices. Moustakas (1994) suggests "broad questions may also facilitate the obtaining of rich, vital, substantive descriptions" (p. 116). The interview protocol, using semi-structured open-ended interview questions, followed Creswell's (2014) sample interview protocol or guide (p. 167).

1. How would you describe your leadership role and mission in a Christian school?

2. What is your main goal as the leader of a Christian school?

3. In what ways do you, as the school leader, engage biblical studies in a Christian school?

4. How do you, as the school leader, encourage and support teachers and students in their biblical studies?

5. How do you, as the school leader, incorporate a biblical foundation of the Holy Scriptures in your decision-making?

6. How do you, as the school leader, help staff to understand the biblical foundation involved in those decisions?

7. How do you, as the school leader, ensure the spiritual development of staff and students in the Christian school community?

8. What administrative practices ensure spirituality of the Christian faith tradition?

9. How do you, as the school leader, provide opportunities to develop aspects of spirituality through prayer and meditation?

10. What administrative practices demonstrate and foster an attitude of service in the school and in the world based on theology of the cross as referenced in Mark 16:15?

11. What administrative practices value the teaching of Christian Studies in the Christian school?

12. What administrative practices ensure that time and resources of spiritual nurture are provided for teachers?

13. How do you, as the school leader, provide guidance for staff as they work through the implementation of classroom issues such as behavior management based on a sound group of law and gospel?

In closing of the interview, I thanked each participant for their time and participation and explained that I would ensure confidentiality of their responses including potential future interviews.

The interview questions were based on Bartsch's (2006) spiritual leadership practices in building up the school family as a Christian educational community of faith where spiritual nurture can occur. Bartsch (2006) contended the principal naturally builds up the school family as an educational community, but as the spiritual leader of the school, needs additional practices in developing and leading school community of faith and the spiritual development of students.

The first two questions were intended to help participants consider the various places of responsibility in which a principal or head of school operates within the Christian school community of faith. These questions allowed the participants to describe their responsibility as the spiritual leader of that community (Bartsch, 2006). In addition, the questions helped participants to begin reflecting upon their leadership practices in relation to ACSI school mission.

Questions three through six were designed to help the Christian school principal to further express their mission into practice and application of the Holy Scriptures into all areas of

the educational program (Bartsch, 2006). The questions are intended to place the participant in the role of expert on Christian school leadership practices with a theological basis in dealing with the various leadership demands. Bartsch (2006) explained the school leader's "grasp of theology and the dialogue between theology and education in dealing with educational matters" should be expressed and articulated (Bartsch, 2006, p. 33). Questions three through six also helped participants articulate their theological rationale during decision-making in the school community of faith.

Questions seven through nine were intended to reveal the school leadership practices the participants describe as opportunities for members of the school community of faith to develop spirituality as it is lived, practiced, and experienced. These questions also helped the participant to express the understanding and practice of spirituality within the school community (Bartsch, 2006).

Questions 10 through 13 were intended to help participants describe other issues the principal encounters when leading and developing spirituality within the faith community of the school to which he/she belongs. These questions are also intended to seek a description of the various demands or responsibilities that are placed on the school leader or self-imposed (Bartsch, 2006).

Documents

Creswell (2014) writes that in a phenomenological study multiple forms of data collection are recommended so that the researcher can build an in-depth picture and description of the phenomenon. Therefore, participants were also asked to provide via email, fax, or mail documents such as official memos, meeting minutes, schedules, written procedures, or policies that helped explain the information they provided in the interview (Creswell, 2014). An

explanation of the use of documents was provided in an email correspondence to the participants. Participants had the option of providing documents as additional information to clarify their roles, responsibilities, and school leadership practices as spiritual leaders in their school community of faith.

Focus Group

Data were also obtained through the interaction of participants within an online focus group session. Krueger and Casey (2015) explained the purpose of a focus group is to reveal factors such as perceptions and ideas that impact opinions, practice, policy, behavior, or motivation. The purpose of the online focus group for this study was to capture a deeper understanding of how perceived Christian school leadership practices impact a school community of faith. Four of the study participants were available to participate in the focus group interview conducted using Free Conference Call.com for approximately 60 minutes in length during summer school hours to discuss their perceptions of Christian school leadership practices impact the creation of a school environment where spiritual nurture can occur in students. Six participants agreed to participate but two participants could not join due to power outage and illness. Free Conference Call.com allowed for participants to become involved across distances and provided an interactive synchronous method for data collection (Janghorban, Roudsari, & Taghipour, 2014; Krueger & Casey, 2015). Free Conference Call.com helped to decrease any likelihood of major technical difficulties that occurs with online conferencing, because of easier access with the use of a cell phone or office phone, because it is less time consuming for the participants with the use of a dial in number and access code and because it provided a simple method for the participants to be involved. Free Conference Call also provided an audio recording used for transcriptions. Potential participants were contacted

via an email which included details of the focus group session. Participants were also informed of the audio recording of the focus group session in the request email. After participants agreed to contribute to the Free Conference Call.com focus group session, the time of the session was arranged. The focus group session consisted of 13 open-ended questions that expanded on themes discovered during the individual interview sessions.

The following focus group protocol utilized Krueger and Casey's (2015) guidelines for developing a questioning route by using open ended questions and focus group prompts to allow participants to determine the direction of their responses and to stimulate conversations, engaging all of the participants.

1. In 30-60 seconds, share a little bit about your hobbies, interests, and families.

2. What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the terms Christian school leader and spiritual nurture?

3. What do you believe it means to be a school leader of a Christian school affiliated with the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI)?

4. What do you think of your role as the Christian school leader in an ACSI affiliated Christian school?

5. How do you believe your role as the Christian school leader relates to the mission of the Christian school?

6. In what ways do you believe your leadership practice fulfills the mission of a Christian school?

7. What Christian school leadership practices do you believe show an expression of the Christian faith in the school community?

8. What Christian school leadership practices do you believe help the spiritual formation of the school community of faith?

9. What Christian school leadership practices do you believe help new staff and students who have their own expressions of spirituality to understand the existing practice of spirituality in the school community of faith?

10. What Christian school leadership practices do you believe demonstrate total dependence on biblical foundations in the Holy Scriptures in the school community of faith?

11. How do you believe a Christian school leader leads by example in the school community?

12. Of all the Christian school leadership practices we discussed, which one is most important to you?

13. Is there anything else you would like to add to previous comments or statements made during the focus group session?

The focus group questions were developed based on Krueger and Casey's (2015) guidelines for using categories of questions in the flow of a focus group interview. The first question was an opening question that participants could easily and quickly answer. The purpose is not to get information but was used as a "process of getting everyone to talk early in the group" and help them to feel comfortable with sharing (Krueger & Casey, 2015, p. 44). Question two was an introductory question, which was used to get the participants thinking about their connection with the topic and also begins to "give the moderator clues about participants' views (Krueger & Casey, p. 45). Questions three through five were transition questions which Krueger and Casey (2015) describe as questions which moved the conversation into the key

questions and set the stage for the key questions that motivated the study (p. 45). These questions helped participants to reflect on their practice in fulfilling the Christian school mission.

Questions six through 11 were key questions that guided the study (Krueger & Casey, 2015). In similar function as the telephone interview questions, these focus group key questions were also intended to find out more about how practices perceived by the participants as a Christian school leader impacts an environment where spiritual nurture can occur.

Questions 12 and 13 were ending or closing questions which Krueger and Casey (2015) describe as two types: the "all things considered question" and "the final question" in helping to flow the focus group interview (p. 46). Question 12 was intended to "determine the final position of participants" on what perceived Christian school leadership practices are most important in creating an environment where spiritual nurture can occur (Krueger & Casey, 2015, p. 46). As participants reflected on the comments shared during the focus group interview, Question 13 was the final question used as another opportunity for participants to add information and to also make sure important aspects were not missed.

Data Analysis

Data were organized and analyzed using Moustakas' (1994) phenomenological analysis approach and Creswell's (2014) data analysis spiral activities. According to Moustakas (1994), bracketing or *epoche*, was a necessary first step in data analysis because it required a new way of looking at the phenomenon that is being described and setting aside any presuppositions, everyday understandings, and judgments. Bracketing was used during the reading, rereading, and coding of data collected to suspend my personal or professional understandings and judgments of administrative practice in K-12 ACSI Christian schools. Bracketing was also used in a reflective way by introducing my personal and professional understandings in my role as the

researcher. Creswell (2014) suggested bracketing as a reflective move where the researcher decides how his or her personal understandings were introduced into the study.

The interviews, documents, and focus group session was audio recorded and then transcribed into documents which helped in following the data analysis steps. The second data analysis technique used was based on Creswell's (2014) data analysis spiral activities. Creswell (2014) explained that spiral activities begins with the application of several facets of analytic strategies including text, images, and/or recordings and ends with a narrative. This study applied the strategies in steps. The first step involved reading and rereading the interview transcripts, documents, and the focus group transcript several times while writing memos including short phrases, emergent ideas and key words in the margins. Creswell (2014) explained that memoing helps to track the development of ideas through the data analysis process. Memoing was also the first method of code-generating. The next code-generating method used was in-vivo coding to "search for commonalities throughout the data and employ an evolving repertoire of established codes" (Saldana, 2016, p. 79). In-vivo coding allowed me to capture and represent the essence of entire excerpts of the participants' responses into broader representations of themes which I used for the next code-generating method, lean coding (Saldana, 2016). Lean coding involved describing, classifying, and interpreting the data by forming codes or categories of information in an approach as suggested by Creswell (2014). Lean coding involved forming a short list of five to six prominent categories and increasing the coded list during review and re-review of transcripts toward a final code list of 25 prominent categories of information (Creswell, 2014). The third step included grouping the prominent codes or categories into emerging themes (Creswell, 2014). The formation of themes from the codes helped to describe the essence of the phenomenon and spiral into the fourth step of data analysis used in this study, which was to

develop and assess interpretations based on what is meaningful in the patterns, themes, and categories (Creswell, 2014).

The final activity in the data analysis spiral as explained by Creswell (2014) was representing and visualizing the data, which involved the fifth step of creating a textural "verbatim" description of "what the participants in this study experienced with the phenomenon" (p. 201). The next step was creating a structural description of "how" the experience happened within the setting and context in which the phenomenon was experienced. For this study, the setting and context were the various ACSI Christian schools and the phenomenon was the Christian school leader perceptions as spiritual leaders to impact the creation of a school environment where spiritual nurture can occur in students. The final step in the data analysis phenomenological description involved writing the composite description of the phenomenon incorporating both the textural and structural descriptions to provide the "essence" of what the participants experienced and how they experienced it (Creswell, 2014, p. 201).

For data analysis of the telephone and focus group interviews, text-based qualitative data for manual coding and analyzing was developed from printed full transcripts of each participant interview and focus group session (Krueger & Casey, 2015; Saldaña, 2016). The transcripts were in a double-spaced format with a wide right-hand margin for writing codes and memoing. As suggested by Saldaña (2016) the interviewer's questions, prompts, and comments were not coded because they were more "functional than substantive" (p. 17). Data analysis of telephone and focus group interviews followed with Creswell's (2014) data analysis spiral activities as previously described with lean coding, formation of themes, and rich phenomenological description of the essence of the participants experience.

Saldaña (2016) explained documents are "social products" carefully examined as they reflect the "interests and perspectives of their authors" and "carry values and ideologies, either intended or not" (p. 61). Documents or artifacts in written form were analyzed based on their contents. Saldaña (2016) explained that documents as visual documentation allows more reflection and meaning-making through coding and memoing. Analytic memo writing is critical in analyzing documents (Saldaña, 2016). Documents were read and reread for coding and memoing of significant themes and meanings of the participants own work. Writing memos including short phrases, emergent ideas and key words in the margins helped to track the development of ideas through the data analysis process (Creswell, 2014). Following memo writing and coding, the subsequent data analysis spiral activities in the process of analyzing documents included lean coding, formation of themes, and rich phenomenological description of the essence of the participants' experience.

Trustworthiness

One of the three strategies that was used to ensure trustworthiness, is clarifying my researcher bias by commenting on past experiences, biases, prejudices, and orientations that could shape the interpretation my approach to the study (Creswell, 2014). Another strategy to establish trustworthiness was the use of rich, thick, descriptions that of the interviews and focus group sessions, along with detailed descriptions of the participants and the setting (Creswell, 2014). Triangulation is additionally recommended as it involves "corroborating evidence from different sources to shed light on a theme or perspective" (Creswell, 2014, p. 251). Triangulation of data collection and data analysis spiral activities helped to validate interviews, documents, and focus group in the research.

Credibility

Triangulation of multiple data sources and transcendental phenomenological strategies of data analysis were used to establish credibility. The three data sources used were interviews, documents, and a focus group. The evidence gathered from these data sources sheds light on the significant themes that emerged to explain the phenomenon which establishes credibility of the data sources and methods used in data analysis. As Creswell (2014) explains, triangulation makes use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories to provide substantiating evidence and establish credibility. Another validation strategy in establishing credibility, was conducted by asking the participants of the focus group to reflect on the accuracy of the summary that was provided prior to ending the interview session (Creswell, 2014).

Triangulation is a path of thinking towards self, other, and thing or physical environment which provides varying perspectives of the same phenomenon. Data analysis of coding and memoing of emergent themes and developing a detailed phenomenological description of the participants' experiences also helped to establish credibility of the study. In this study, different participants and methods of data collection and data analysis strategies provided the varying perspectives of the research study and provided me with "different points of orientation and direction from which to triangulate the same domain" to further establish credibility of the research (Malpas, 2015, p. 105).

Dependability and Confirmability

Clarifying my biases as the researcher of the present study established dependability. In addition, detailed information of the methods and methods shows in the processes of data collection and data analysis, which ensured appropriate research design and implementation (Moon, Brewer, Hartley, Adams, & Blackman, 2016). My reflexivity using strategies as *epoche*

and inter-subjectivity in the transcendental phenomenological process also helped to ensure dependability of the research procedures. In my role as researcher, I discussed my experiences with the phenomenon and how past experiences shaped my perspective of the phenomenon. Perhaps the most important factor in establishing dependability and confirmability were the stages of the transcendental process that required textural description of the meaning and essence of the phenomenon and the structural essence of the phenomenon. According to Moon et al. (2016) confirmability can be achieved by providing a detailed methodological description. I applied the strategy of reflexivity as explained by Creswell (2014) to ensure confirmability. Confirmability was also demonstrated in my discussion of my own experiences with the phenomenon and how my past experiences shaped my interpretation of the phenomenon in different sections of the study. I was very explicit about my position throughout the research study.

Transferability

A rich, thick description provided through the textural description of the meaning and essence of the phenomenon and the structural essence of the phenomenon in transcendental data analysis and interpretation increased transferability. Creswell (2014) explained "rich, thick description allows readers to make decisions regarding transferability because the writer describes in detail the participants or setting under study" (p. 252). In addition, to increase transferability, I also included a detailed description of methods, setting, and participants in the study (Creswell 2014).

<div align="center">

Ethical Considerations

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Prior to conducting the study, submission for IRB approval was a necessary ethical issue which I addressed. It is important that I disclosed the purpose of the study when I contacted each

participant (Creswell, 2014). It was a priority to disclose all information pertaining to the study. In addition, I also masked names, through the use of pseudonyms, and developed composite profiles to address ethical considerations. Participants were able to opt out of the research study at any time. I also informed participants of the purpose and use of the study data and how the research data were kept in a secure location where only I had access. Finally, I reported all data honestly and ethically.

Summary

Chapter Three described the qualitative research methods that were used in this transcendental phenomenological study to investigate how Christian school leadership practices impact the creation of a school environment where spiritual nurture can occur in students. The three research questions sought to understand how Christian school leadership practices are perceived by Christian school leaders to impact a school community of faith. The research took place in various ACSI affiliated accredited and member K-12 Christian schools in Pennsylvania. Participants in the study were selected through criterion sampling where an open web search of ACSI affiliated schools was used, to identify participants based on their experience as a Christian school leader of an ACSI affiliated Christian school.

My role as the researcher was identified to allow for further understanding of my personal and professional experiences with the phenomenon and identified my presuppositions. Upon International Review Board (IRB) approval, three forms of data were collected, including individual telephone interviews using open-ended questions, documents as artifacts, and an open-ended focus group session. During data collection, *epoche* was used to view the data from a fresh outlook, as if for the first time. All data collected was analyzed using Creswell's (2014) data analysis spiral activities and Moustakas' (1994) phenomenological data analysis approach.

In order to ensure trustworthiness, bracketing, triangulation, thick descriptions, and member checking were integrated into the study. In addition, ethical considerations included application of IRB policies, site and participant anonymity in using pseudonyms, informing the participants of all information pertaining to the study, and the safety and security of all research materials.

This study sought to fill a gap in Christian school leadership research. The findings of this study provides organizations as ACSI, which supports Christian educators and Christian schools worldwide, with valuable information of Christian school leadership practices.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand how leadership practices are perceived by Christian school leaders to impact the creation of an environment where spiritual nurture can occur in ACSI affiliated schools. Transcendental phenomenology was used to focus on Christian school leadership practices. Data were organized and analyzed using Moustakas' (1994) phenomenological analysis approach and Creswell's (2014) data analysis spiral activities. Triangulation of multiple data sources was validated using three forms of data collection which were interviews, documents, and a focus group session. Eleven Christian school leaders' experiences were investigated in ACSI affiliated schools, including eight schools with grades Pre-Kindergarten to twelve; one school with grades seven to twelve; one school with grades Kindergarten to eighth; and one school with grades Kindergarten to twelve. This chapter includes a description of each participant, the findings of the study, and a chapter summary. The participants' experiences are discussed in relation to three major themes which are based on the research questions guiding this study: leadership practices, theological beliefs, and development of spirituality. Following the discussion of participants' experiences, answers to the research questions are provided.

Participants

The participants in this study included 11 Christian school leaders of ACSI affiliated schools in Pennsylvania. Criterion sampling was used to identify Christian school leaders of schools that were identified as ACSI member and/or accredited schools who embody the ACSI mission, vision and goals "to help children grow spiritually, academically, and culturally" (ACSI, 2016). The participants included eight Caucasian females and three Caucasian males

from eight Pre-Kindergarten to grade twelve schools; one school with grades seven to 12; one

school with grades Kindergarten to 12; and one school with grades Kindergarten to eight. Each

participant currently serves in a Christian school leadership position, four as the Head of School,

one as the Assistant Head of School, one in a dual role as the Elementary Principal and

Curriculum Coordinator, three as Principals, one as an Assistant Administrator, and one as the

Upper School Principal. A detailed description of each participants' experience of the

phenomenon is presented in the following section. Each participant chose their own pseudonym

that was used in the descriptions and throughout the findings to protect their anonymity and the

anonymity of the Christian school in which they serve as the school leader.

Table 1

Christian School Leader Overview

School Leader	School Configuration	Ethnicity	Gender	Administrative Role
Allen	PreK - 12	Caucasian	Male	Head of School
Amber	PreK - 12	Caucasian	Female	Principal
Claire	K - 12	Caucasian	Female	Head of School
Daisy	PreK – 12	Caucasian	Female	Asst. Administrator
Daniel	PreK - 12	Caucasian	Male	Upper School Principal
Darcy	PreK - 12	Caucasian	Female	Head of School
Gwen	PreK - 12	Caucasian	Female	Elementary Principal/ Curriculum Coordinator
Harold	K - 8	Caucasian	Male	Principal
Katherine	PreK - 12	Caucasian	Female	Asst. Head of School
Lois	7 - 12	Caucasian	Female	Head of School
Lori	PreK - 12	Caucasian	Female	Principal

Allen

Allen is the Head of School at Mountain Christian School, an ACSI accredited and

member school, for Pre-Kindergarten to grade twelve children and youth. As Head of School,

Allen states his role is "making sure everybody else is able to do his/her job to the best of their

ability and provide people with the steps to achieve so that "we meet the mission of the school."

Allen heavily influences the vision which is set by the school board and school committees, of

which he is a major part. Allen and the school committees work as a team to make the vision a

reality. As Head of School, Allen articulates the vision, gives all stakeholders including parents,

students, teachers, and school staff the steps and together as a team, they implement the vision.

Allen believes his main goal is to make sure that the school committees are meeting or exceeding

the mission utilizing a strategic plan which is representative of and derived from the mission and

developed by a diverse stakeholder representation. Strategic plan development involves school

committees who represent certain sections of the strategic plan and small groups of parent

forums who are interested in participating in the strategic plan development for the school.

Allen's role is to also make sure there is diverse representation of voices meaning input and that

data is used for strategic planning so that the mission is achieved throughout the school year.

Amber

Amber became the school leader of The Academy in January 2010 and continues to strive

to assist students in discovering their God-given potential. Prior to her principal assignment,

Amber taught sixth grade at The Academy and another Christian school. She was working as an

instructional coach for teachers and the activities coordinator at The Academy when the principal

announced he was leaving. It was difficult finding a replacement and the assigned administrator

could not fulfill his responsibilities and also act as the principal. Amber volunteered to help in

the principal position and has served in that role since volunteering. She believes her principal

role and mission is to implement Christian education, support teachers, and provide opportunities

for students and teachers. The Academy is an ACSI member school and an incorporated, non-

profit organization intended to provide Christian education on the elementary and high school

levels (PreK-12). Founded in 1984, The Academy became a ministry of a local Baptist church in 1994. By 2014, The Academy agreeably separated from the Baptist church and became an independent Christian school again. Amber's main goal is to ground students firmly in their faith where students "leave firmly rooted in their faith and not easily swayed by whatever topics comes down the pike in college or in the work place." Amber stresses that she wants students to be firm in their faith, knowing how to answer and respond when there are challenges of their faith.

Claire

Claire is the Head of School and a teacher for Zimmer Christian School for Kindergarten to grade twelve children and youth. She notes her leadership role is primarily "one of training a discipleship for our middle school and high school teachers as well as discipleship of our middle school and high school students." She considers it a great privilege working with middle and high school students, mainly overseeing their academic, spiritual, and physical growth throughout the course of the day. As an ACSI affiliated school, the mission of Zimmer Christian School, is to help young people confidently engage the world as disciples of Jesus Christ. Claire recognizes that as a school the goal is to help students grow academically, but she also wants students to stand apart in a world of a lot of smart people and be able to affect culture for the Gospel wherever they go, and in whatever they are doing. As a school leader, Claire will not ignore "that major calling" on students' lives meaning "it is necessary for students to be able to do whatever it is God is calling them to do." She believes this is the reason parents have partnered with Zimmer Christian School. Personally, Claire's main goal as a teacher and administrator is to be able to help students get smarter, to be able to do whatever God is calling

them to do, and able to prepare them for what lies ahead. Discipleship in preparation is primarily what Claire describes as her role in essence, "I prepare and disciple."

Daisy

Daisy is a former student and current Assistant Administrator at DW Christian School which serves children and youth in Pre-Kindergarten to twelfth grade. Daisy also brings a very unique perspective of Christian school leadership at DW Christian School because she is a graduate of the school, which gives her a great vantage point. Daisy's goal is to make the school "better than before, when she was a student by providing more opportunities to grow spiritually and academically." She is very involved in her students' lives and attends many of her students' events. DW Christian School celebrated 40 years of ministry in 2016 and is an ACSI accredited and member school. The mission of DW Christian School is to partner with families to create a community of learning that educates the whole student and cultivates Christ-centered lives. Daisy describes her leadership role as making sure the day-to-day operations are functioning as part of a team of administrators who handle some of the logistics of "making things happen." School administration functions as a team with a common goal of partnering with the parents to make sure they meet the academic and spiritual growth of each student. Daisy works closely with the Head of School to make sure the mission of meeting the needs of each individual student and what their parents' goals are for them, as well. As the school administration partners with parents, the mission is equipping students to thrive and grow in Christ and in areas of family, academics, spirituality and also knowing their role in society once they graduate from DW Christian School.

Daniel

Daniel is the Upper School Principal of South Central Christian Academy, an ACSI accredited and member school, with grades six through twelve. Daniel is in charge of student discipline and teacher supervision, which is a role in which he shares with the Director of Curriculum and Instruction (DCI). The task of teacher supervision of lesson plans and evaluations and "things like that" are shared between Daniel and the DCI. He is also in charge of school safety which includes safety drill schedules and the school safety trainings. Another element of his role for the upper school is scheduling, starting with high school and then the middle school. He also assists the lower school teachers in coordinating the schedule for the lower school because some of the lower school teachers are also upper school teachers. Daniel's mission aligns with the school mission which focuses on worldview training and the belief that everything they're doing is intended to give a good rigorous academic education, provide a safe environment, and equip students with a biblical worldview. Very passionate about the mission, Daniel feels called by God to be allowed to take an active role in doing the work as the school leader in fulfilling the mission. With a strong belief in the school, home, and church partnership, Daniel's main goal as a leader is to be a good partner for the parents that are choosing to partner with the school for their children's education. He wants to ensure that "we are doing, for the parents, what we say we're going to do" and for teachers living out their mission, making sure the school is a good place to work and a place where they can fulfill what God has called them to do.

Darcy

Darcy is currently the Head of School at SCS Christian School for students in Pre-Kindergarten through grade twelve. SCS Christian School is an ACSI member school that has

been in operation for twenty years and has experienced a lot of leadership changes, which Darcy feels is true for Christian schools for one main reason: financial challenges. She is the sixth administrator and has been serving as the head of school for five years. "This is the first time in a long time," Darcy expressed, "teachers have had somebody that's here." Previous administrators would serve from home while others served in dual roles, as principal and first or second grade teachers. Prior to deciding to accept the position as head of school at SCS Christian School, Darcy worked in nursing and taught on the collegiate level and ended up as a nurse at a county jail for 15 years. Her husband is a pastor and their family was relocated. Darcy left nursing for a long time and didn't know what to do after relocating to Pennsylvania. She tried to get back into nursing, but didn't enjoy it because it had become so computer and insurance driven. There was a small Christian school connected with her church, and after being asked several times to help with the Christian school, she decided to pray asking God, "Lord, I'll be the vessel, You be the Oil, cause I don't know how to run a Christian school, but I'll do the best I can." Darcy accepted the position and will soon be completing the Leadership U program with ACSI. Christian school leadership is like a new career for Darcy, who is 67 years of age. During ACSI Leadership U, which is leadership professional development and training, Darcy recalls one of the most important class activities in which she had to write a life vision and goal. For Darcy, writing a life vision and goal was nothing new. Darcy explained she had done this every year throughout part of her college years and also for most of her life. From this ACSI leadership training experience, she has learned when God opens the door and pushes you through, He's going to give you the skills to do it, even though you don't think you can. Her philosophy is "what you see, is what you get" which means she dedicated her life to the Lord, and wants to please Him and that is one of her goals and mission as a Christian school leader.

Another life goal is to be an example as an encourager to help others make better and more thoughtful decisions.

Gwen

Gwen is part of a four-member administrative team and serves in a dual administrative role as the Elementary Principal and Curriculum Coordinator at Clayton Christian School for Pre-Kindergarten through grade twelve children and youth. She handles the daily operation in the elementary school with a mission of "developing lives of consequence for the Kingdom of God." Gwen works very closely with the secondary principal on many things that require a whole school decision to be made in order to maintain consistency because of the large student population and the broad range of ages of the students who attend Clayton Christian School. In relation to her role, Gwen says, "We have schoolwide events we have to come together on, but I'd say a good 80% of my job is handling what's going on in the elementary end of things for the 250 Pre-Kindergarten to fifth grade students" Clayton Christian School is a "mature ACSI accredited school" which means they are no longer required to do beginning protocol to maintain accreditation. Gwen explained that they complete ACSI Accreditation by School Projects (ASP) to show growth and to maintain yearly ACSI accreditation as a mature school. Clayton Christian School follows the core values of Anabaptist Christianity. As one of the school leaders, Gwen's main goals are: (a) maintaining peace and reconciliation in the community; (b) instilling the Anabaptist principles; and (c) making sure "we're in right relationship with God and everyone we deal with."

Harold

Harold is a "servant leader" who "supports teachers and enables teachers to teach" at North Hill Christian School for Kindergarten to eighth grade children and youth. Harold

considers it both an honor and privilege to be the principal and often uses the phrase, "they don't have school so principals can prince, but they have school so teachers can teach." As an educator for over 28 years, Harold, never imagined that God would place him in Pennsylvania as the principal of a Christian School. He started out as a public school band director in the suburbs of New York and would probably still be making music with students. He explained, "God had other plans for me; after sixteen years of teaching, I felt God's calling to become a Christian school administrator." Harold shares how being a principal of a Christian school can be extremely challenging, but sharing the love of Jesus Christ with teachers, students, and parents brings overwhelming joy. When reflecting on how God has led Harold to North Hill Christian School and using him to oversee His kingdom work, he feels both humbled and thankful. North Hill Christian School is an ACSI affiliated school located in a "city of poverty" and one of Harold's missions is to reach out into the city to do whatever he can to get the kids who want to be at North Hill Christian School to be there, regardless of whether they can pay or not; "just get them here." Another mission for Harold is to share Jesus Christ with everybody who comes through the door of the school. The role of Harold is to create an environment in which teachers can teach and do whatever needs to be done to make sure teaching gets done. His main goal is to also make sure the Gospel goes forth "correctly and completely" and facilitates to make sure he has teachers on board with the mission of sharing the Gospel.

Katherine

Katherine is the Assistant Head of School at Deerfield Christian School for Pre-Kindergarten through grade twelve students. As the Assistant Head of School, Katherine "oversees all things academic" as she is driven by the mission which is to educate students who will serve God and impact the world through thought and action. Deerfield Christian School is

an ACSI accredited school and has a distinctive Christian college preparatory program with a diverse community of students and families. Ethnic minorities represent 38% of the student body, international students from seven countries are enrolled, and families who attend the school represent over 140 churches. As the Assistant Head of School, Katherine's main goal is to help students see all of life and learning through the lens of God's word.

Lois

Lois is the Head of School at Foundations Christian Academy (FCA) with grades seven to twelve. In addition to Head of School, Lois serves in multiple areas of the school, providing leadership, conducting the family interviews and "pretty much everything" as Lois explains. Lois describes FCA as a small school in their second year of operation, which is also a new ACSI membership school with a heavy parent partnership. FCA is a developing University-Model secondary program dedicated to partnering with parents to prepare students for college and life through purposeful spiritual formation and exceptional academics. Lois also describes FCA as a family ministry extension because of their unique schedule where students attend school three days out of the week and parents work with their children during the day for two days out of the week. Her main goal is to honor the Lord. Lois shared, "I definitely was called to this position and I feel like it's the Lord's school, not my school." Lois enjoys being able to pop in and out of all of the classes at FCA and appreciates opportunities to observe many of their fun activities. She also loves working with the students and families, and especially enjoys watching students thrive as the year progresses. Lois believes Christian school leaders are shepherds in charge of leading with humility and caring. Furthermore, she is committed to serve as a Christian school leader willing to accept a large sense of responsibility to protect and promote the school vision.

Lori

Lori is the Principal at Drummond Christian Academy for students in Pre-Kindergarten through grade twelve. As the Head of School, Lori's role as Principal is to keep the school running, "not just for today, but for the future" and try her best to set things in motion with procedures and policies that will go beyond the time she serves at Drummond Christian Academy, an ACSI accredited school. Lori manages "things" such as scheduling, supervising teachers, curriculum, and daily activities of the school while working alongside the executive director who provides her with the support she needs when it comes to "what's happening." Even though the executive director is not there all the time, Lori feels like they work as a team. Drummond Christian Academy is an evangelical school where not all students are professing Christians, although they do "need to be open to the Word, respectful and receive the Word." Lori explains that families, are likewise, some are churched and some are not. All students and parents receive the Drummond Christian Academy handbooks which indicate what type of student "we're looking for" and agree to be receptive of the school's core Christian values and learn to live as Christians. Lori's mission is about providing Christian programs for the family and having students "have their Christianity become a lifestyle, not just something they believe in."

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Results

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The present study was guided by three research questions addressing how Christian school leaders in ACSI member and accredited schools in Pennsylvania perceive their practices, theological beliefs, and leading and developing the spirituality of others impacts the creation of an environment where spiritual nurture can occur.

In my efforts to look at the phenomenon with fresh eyes and see the themes in the participants' responses as they emerged, I made notes in the margins during the reading, rereading and coding of the transcribed data collected. I have no prior experience with Christian school leadership and did not form any assumptions, prejudgments, or presuppositions about the participants of my study. While reading and rereading the data sources, I applied three main code-generating methods to capture the themes: memoing, in-vivo coding, and lean coding. Memoing included short written phrases, emergent ideas, and key words in the margins of the interview and focus group transcriptions and document artifacts. The second code-generating method I used was in-vivo coding (Saldaña, 2016) to bracket out my own voice and thoughts and immerse myself in the participants' experiences. In-vivo coding allowed me to use the terms of the participants themselves. The codes were participant-inspired meanings as opposed to researcher-generated codes (Saldaña, 2016). According to Saldaña (2016), in-vivo coding is another way of crucially checking whether the researcher grasped what is significant to the participant and helps to "crystallize and condense meanings" (p. 107). As Saldaña (2016) suggested not to become inundated with too many codes, I "lumped" the first and second cycle codes to capture and represent the essence of entire excerpts of responses into broader representations or themes which I used in lean coding, the third cycle of the code-generating methods, which I applied during data analysis (p. 79). I used the participants' quotes and formed lists of prominent categories into emerging themes, which helped to describe the essence of the phenomenon. Interviews, a focus group, and document artifacts revealed different perspectives and voices of the participants because of the various school leadership roles, missions, and goals at the Christian schools in which they serve. The data sources also showed the relationship between Christian school leadership role and mission and perceived leadership practices that

impact the creation of an environment where spiritual nurture can occur in ACSI affiliated schools. During analysis of interview transcriptions, participants' experiences were revealed and interrelated as the themes emerged. Reviewing and categorizing the data allowed me to gain knowledge and understanding of each participants' Christian school leadership practices and greater insight into their lived experiences.

Based on summer work calendars, six participants were available and invited to participate in a scheduled focus group session using Free Conference Call. Due to unforeseen circumstances with the emergency surgery of one of the participants, and a power outage in the area of the school where another participant worked, four of the six participants were able to call-in for the conference and provided valuable data for the focus group session. Analysis of the focus group transcription also helped me to make connections to the Christian school leadership practices of the participants and provided me with a clear representation of the Christian school leaders' experiences with the phenomenon being studied. Document artifacts submitted by five participants also showed common themes revealed in the interview and focus group transcriptions of Christian school leadership practices perceived to create an environment where spiritual nurture can occur in ACSI affiliated schools. The documents submitted also supported and further explained Christian school leadership practices that were commonly shared in the participants' interviews. Themes and subthemes are presented in the Table 2 and results are further discussed in the following section. The present organization of results for each subtheme was based on the order of the interview and focus group questions and responses which align with the presentation of my findings discussed in the following chapter.

Table 2

Themes, Subthemes and Codes

Themes	Subthemes	Codes
Leadership Practices	Role/Mission	Keep mission in forefront
		Emulate the mission
		Communicate mission
		Dual roles/responsibilities
		Upper school Principal
		Elementary Principal
		Head of School
		Student-driven
		Teacher-driven
		Called by God
		Partner with parents/churches
		Provide for people
		Team member
		Create and structure
		Overseer
		Manage
		Coordinate
		Shepherds
		Spiritual guide
		Influence the vision
		Teach the whole gospel
	Goals	Motivate
		Commitment to serve
		Help students
		Influence the vision
		Fulfill the mission
		Teach the whole gospel
		Help families
		Discipleship
	Leadership Competence	ACSI Affiliation
		Maintaining accreditation
		Understands Christian schools
		Accountability
		Legitimacy
		School leader training
		Leadership tools
		Teacher resources
		ACSI CEUs certification/credits

	Attitude of Service	Servant leadership Family ministry Mission projects Service project requirement Global service
	Teaching of Christian Studies	Integrate biblical principles Modeling Christian faith Scheduling Bible classes Monitor/assess student growth Set requirements for teachers Offer grace/restoration Develop Christian lifestyle Total dependence on Scriptures
	Provide Time/Resources	Books/materials Free webinars Personal study time Maintain Christian standards Budget for trainings/conferences Schedule time for prayer/ devotions Professional development days
	Guidance for Staff	Establish consistency Classroom observations Regular staff meetings Behavior Management Strategies Being present/accessible Meet with students Leadership learning opportunities Restorative Discipline Equip staff with skills Consistent/open communication Provide counseling services
	Fulfill the Mission	Mission aligns with practice Partnering with families Daily decisions Meeting goals Focused on God's will Mentoring
	Lead by Example	Individual spiritual growth

		Support teachers/students Willing participant Servant leader Praying with staff Life-long learner
Theological Beliefs	Engage Biblical Studies	Bible class Chapel Christian/Bible curriculum Biblical worldview teaching Integration of Scriptures Prayer groups/partners Provide Opportunities Books of the Bible Study Morning devotions Weekly meetings Worship periods Focus on Prayer
	Support Students/Staff Biblical Studies	Develop spiritual theme ACSI forums/seminars Staff devotions Being intentional Personal Bible study Discipleship groups Personal prayer life Bible studies
	Scriptural Basis for Decision-Making	Independent Bible study Live by Bible Principles Knowing God's Word Biblical Integration Review Modeling Staff Workshops/Forums
	Increase Staff Understanding of Decision-Making	Established policies Discussions with staff Open communication Being intentional Incorporate prayer Teachers are of same faith
Spiritual Leadership	Spiritual Development	Maintain involvement in church

		Mission trips
		Student/Staff retreats
		Incorporate spiritual theme
		Prayer buddies
		Adherence to covenantal guidelines
		Make spiritual goals
		Lead/guide from spiritual perspective
		Model the life of Jesus Christ
		Get to know teachers
		Family worship
		Dependence on Holy Spirit
		Create atmosphere of growth
	Spirituality of Christian Faith	Corporate prayer
		National Day of Prayer
		Acknowledge dependence on God
		Overnight retreat
		Missions Week
		Personal prayer time
		Devotions/worship
		Support prayer at anytime
		Student reflection journals
		Mentoring students/staff
		Partner with families
		Demonstrate Christ in service
	Spirituality with Prayer/Meditation	Devotions/Worship
		Prayer opportunities schoolwide
		Prayer requests
		Partnerships with pastors/church
		Retreats
		Student reflection journals
		Personal prayer/reflection time

From the data analysis, three major themes and sixteen subthemes emerged. The three major themes are: perceived leadership practices that impact the creation of an environment where spiritual nurture can occur; theological beliefs in leading the faith of the Christian school community; and, the principal or head of school as spiritual leader in leading and developing the

spirituality of others within the Christian school setting. Through data analysis, a composite

description of the phenomenon was developed that incorporated both the textural and structural

descriptions to provide the "essence" of what the Christian school leaders' experienced and how

they experienced it (Creswell, 2014, p. 201). Participants' perceived and identified Christian

school leadership practices were guided by the roles, mission, and goals which emerged in the

participants' responses. Participants shared individual Christian school leader missions, and also

school missions, which they used as the focal point in describing perceived leadership practices.

Following the discussion of their role, mission, and goals, participants described perceived

practices from an individual Christian school leader perspective and/or as a member of a

Christian school leadership team perspective. The essence of the data analysis shows Christian

school leaders of ACSI schools who have experienced one phenomenon, but with different

perspectives and voices. Relative to the research questions guiding this study, Christian school

leaders' lived experiences within their school settings will be discussed as subthemes which

underlie three major themes: leadership practices, theological beliefs and spiritual leadership.

Theme One: Leadership Practices

The first theme developed understanding of research question one that sought to discover

how Christian school leaders perceive leadership practices impacts the creation of an

environment where spiritual nurture can occur in ACSI affiliated schools. Participant responses

describe leadership practices based on their role, mission and goals. Christian school leaders

shared ways in which they develop and lead the school community of faith with specific

leadership responsibilities. Descriptions of leadership practices revealed 82 codes, which were

lean coded into nine subthemes. Nine subthemes were parsed from the data associated with

theme one leadership practices, which are: role/mission, goals, leadership competence, attitude

of service, teaching of Christian studies, provide time/resources, guidance for staff, fulfill the mission, and lead by example.

Role/Mission. The first sub-theme to emerge from the major theme of leadership practices, was leadership role and mission. Six of the 11 participants provided an in-depth view and experience of the relationship between their role and mission in guiding their Christian school leadership practices. Each participant explained their role in the importance of keeping the mission in the forefront of their leadership practices, emulating the mission both in thought and in example, and communicating the mission to everyone including school staff, parents, and the community. For example, Daisy expressed,

> I think that it's really helpful for the teachers to be able to see that the leadership is able to do that (emulate the mission both in thought and in example) because then they, in turn, are able to embody that for the students and then the students are affecting each other by living that out.

Lois also described her leadership role in the importance of always communicating the mission and vision to faculty, staff, parents, and students, as the vision protects them from becoming "sidetracked or being distracted by things that are not in line with" the mission and vision.

In addition to communicating the mission "right up front," Darcy expressed the importance of keeping the mission in front of the teachers by reviewing the mission with the parents and teachers from the beginning of the school year to clarify "who we are." In addition to communicating and emulating the mission for parents and teachers, Gwen expressed the importance of keeping the mission in the forefront when dealing with students' perspectives, as well. She said,

I think that it's important to keep that in mind (mission) as you're guiding them (students) through social conflicts, through behavioral issues, through character issues such as not wanting to complete their work in a timely fashion or not doing homework or things like that. I think to ensure as you're guiding them and leading them through these processes that what you're doing meets your mission and what the school is desiring to do. So again…trying to keep that in the forefront, regardless of who you're dealing with.

Harold also defined his leadership role as being very much focused on the mission, which aligns with the school mission of providing a good rigorous academic education in a safe environment and believing that "everything we're doing is intended to obviously" carry out the mission. In relation to her leadership role, Katherine also expressed how the mission is driving everything. She explained how the mission is a "huge driver" in all of the decisions she makes.

Four of the 11 participants expressed a teacher-driven leadership role and mission. Darcy expressed the role of being very supportive of teachers because of the numerous leadership changes the school community has experienced. She also stated it is important to build trust. She said, "I didn't want to come in wanting to change everything they (teachers/staff) were doing or being critical. I needed to get to know them a little bit for them to trust me." Harold also expressed his role is to really support teachers. He used the phrase, "They don't have school so principals can prince; they have school so teachers can teach." He continued, "My job is to help them do that; enable them to do that; create an environment in which they can do that. So, whatever needs to be done, my job is to make sure it gets done." Harold also states that his mission is "very simple, it's to share Jesus Christ with everybody who comes in our door." With the support of the executive director, Lori noted how one of her roles and mission as the principal is to supervise teachers along with handling the daily activities of

the school such as scheduling and the curriculum. As the upper school principal, Daniel described his role and mission as teacher supervision of lesson plans and evaluations. He noted that he works along with the director of curriculum and instruction who helps with the task of teacher supervision and teacher evaluations.

Another role and mission described by three of the participants was student-driven. Amber explained that her role and mission is to provide a Christian education to "assist students in discovering their God-given potential and offer service opportunities to put their faith into action." She further explained, "Giving students opportunities to find out what God has given them as abilities and gifts and pulling that out of them." Daisy also noted how important her role and mission is to meet the needs of students. Claire said her leadership role and mission is training and discipleship for middle school and high school students as well as teachers. She further expressed,

> I have the great privilege of working just with our middle school and high school and I
> oversee the academic and the spiritual and the physical growth of that group of people
> throughout the course of the day.

Daniel expressed how he is passionate about his job and role as the upper school principal. He says that his role and mission also includes managing student discipline. He also takes an active role in his mission to equip students with a biblical worldview.

Two out of 11 participants explained how serving in dual roles also doubles the responsibility. Lois shared how being a small school and only in their second year has called for her to lead multiple areas of the school, but her major role and mission is "casting the vision through the school…providing leadership not only to the teachers, but also all areas, including every family that basically builds the DNA of our school." Gwen also serves in dual roles as

elementary principal and curriculum coordinator. She works in part with a four-member administrative team in a Pre-Kindergarten through grade twelve school. To ensure consistency in making decisions and in disciplining, she works closely with the secondary principal. She describes her role and mission as "For the most part, I'd say a good 80% of my job is handling what's going on in the elementary end of things, whether that's with students, parents, teachers, etc."

Overall, the majority of the participants describe their leadership role and mission positively and with a commitment to serve. In addition to specific descriptions to show various perspectives, most of the participants used general terms as handling detail work, overseeing academics and/or spiritual growth of students and staff, managing daily activities of the school, or managing the daily operations of the school to further describe their leadership role and mission.

Goals. A second subtheme to emerge from the major theme of leadership practices was goals. Four of the 11 participants expressed one of their main goals is to partner with parents, families, and/or the church. With a commitment to serve as a school leader who was "definitely called by God," one of Lois's main goals is to build a strong partnership with the parents because of the school's unique schedule. Lois explained "because our school is university style, the parents are working with the students during the day, two days a week and we (school staff) have the students three days a week." Lois shared that she makes sure parents understand the unique vision of the school and fully support the school. As the school leader, Lois said she also wants to honor the Lord because she feels "like it's the Lord's school, not her school." As the elementary principal and curriculum coordinator of an Anabaptist school, one of Gwen's main

goals is to "make sure we're in right relationship with God and everyone we deal with." She further explains,

> I like there to be peace amongst the students. I like there to be peace amongst the teachers; the teachers and the students; the parents; the parents and the teachers; the parents and students. And the parents and the administration. That doesn't mean that everyone gets their way, but it does mean that we, at least come to some type of agreement. We can agree to disagree.

Gwen said this kind of partnership with all stakeholders is necessary to work toward peace with one another in fulfilling the mission of the Anabaptist school, which is "to develop lives of consequence in the world for the Kingdom of God. So, if you have that strife and that tension, it's difficult to maintain that mission." As the school leader, Lori also expressed the goal of partnering with families to provide Christian programs and "help families have Christianity become a lifestyle and not just something they believe in." Similarly, Daniel expressed one of his goals is to ensure the school is in partnership with home and church. He shared,

> I want to be a good partner for the parents that are choosing to partner with us for their children's education, and I want to make sure that we are doing what we , for the parents, what we say we're going to do.

In addition, Daniel feels very strongly about wanting the school to be a place where it's a great place to work for teachers, so that teachers can "live out their mission."

Four of the 11 participants expressed student-oriented goals. As the school leader, Amber said her main goal is:

> I want kids to leave the school firmly rooted in their faith. So, they're not easily swayed by whatever topics come down the pike in college or in the workplace or whatever things

come along that challenge their faith. I want them to be firm in it and know how to

answer and respond.

In addition to the role and mission driving her practice, Katherine shared that her main

goal is to help students see all of life and learning through the lens of God's Word. In an effort

to foster students' academic growth as a school leader, Claire expressed,

> Well number one, because we are a school, obviously our main goal, our main focus, is to
>
> be able to help students grow academically to gain the knowledge that will be necessary
>
> for them to be able to do whatever it is that God is calling them to do. We can't ignore
>
> that major calling. That's why parents have partnered with us in order to be able to help
>
> their kids get smarter and prepare them for what lies ahead of them.

Claire also said that personally, this is one of her major goals as a teacher and administrator, "to

make sure students are prepared for whatever God is calling them to do." In addition, she

described her goal as discipleship in preparation which she says is primarily what she does,

"prepare and disciple." Similarly, Harold expressed his goal is to "make sure the Gospel goes

forth…correctly, completely." His goal is to also reach out into the city of poverty where the

school is located and "to do whatever I can to get kids who want to be here, regardless of

whether they can pay, to get them here." Harold elaborated more on his goal by sharing,

> It's not just on the surface, it's not about changing behavior of the kids. It's not having
>
> them look good on the surface. And know how to behave or know how to, if you would,
>
> how to get away with their sneakiness. Every child is born a sinner. We're all born in
>
> sin. You know the job is to reveal to them their sinfulness. Being that this world is a
>
> broken world, the problem is not with others. The problem is within their own hearts.
>
> And get them to the point where they see they have a need for a Savior. Then introduce

them to the Savior. And too often…can come across to children is just a very simplistic,

God is love.

Harold explained that the whole Gospel means, teaching children and youth there is a

consequence when we do things that are wrong. He said the goal is to teach the entire message,

"It cost His son. So, there is the bad news, before there can be the good news." The goals of the

leaders were expressed with such commitment and dedication to the service and call of God

which makes Christian school leadership unique.

Leadership competence. The third subtheme that emerged from the major theme of

leadership practices was leadership competence. As leaders of ACSI Christian schools, all of the

participants expressed what it means to be a school leader of an ACSI affiliated school and the

importance of utilizing ACSI resources, leadership training and support, continuing accreditation

requirements, professional growth support for staff, collaborative goal setting, and accountability

and evaluation systems to enhance their leadership competency as well as, the Christian

educational program that best meets the educational and spiritual needs of children and youth.

Four of the 11 participants described their role as Christian school leaders in ACSI affiliated

schools. Being given the leadership tools through ACSI Leadership U, Darcy feels that it's

really up to her what she does with those ACSI tools and feels a great obligation to follow

through, to the school and to herself. Darcy submitted two ACSI document artifacts: (1) The

Formative to Flourishing School Continuum: Growing Stronger, which shows a high level

summary for school improvement in areas of board governance, executive leadership, school

visibility, student learning, spiritual formation, school culture, and external accreditation; and (2)

the Christian School Leadership Framework (CSLF) which outlines and describes "competencies

and behaviors considered most important to the performance of heads of Christian schools" and

is constructed on three major categories, leadership from the heart, relational competencies, and strategic competencies. In submitting the document artifacts, Darcy shared most of her leadership practice is applying what she has learned from ACSI leadership training and resources. Moreover, Darcy expressed being a school leader of an ACSI Christian school also means accountability and that it creates a standard and continuous goal "to shoot for." She thinks ACSI is very helpful in giving those guidelines and directions on how to build the school and provides leadership training that is very valuable throughout the year through their Leadership U program.

As a new school and leader to ACSI membership who is also working toward accreditation, Lois agrees that the standard is definitely very helpful, but she feels over the past year they are most appreciative of all the resources ACSI provides. Her role is to learn about all the opportunities ACSI has to offer and then direct different resources to the appropriate people or departments in the school. In addition to the use of ACSI resources, Daisy feels it is rewarding just to be a part of an organization that understands the uniqueness of Christian education and whose goal is to "make sure that you're meeting those standards and working towards new goals…so your school is never staying complacent." Daisy got to know some of the details of how ACSI works because she had become the alumni coordinator for the ACSI Leadership U program which helped her to understand a few more things about the direction of ACSI as she participated in sessions with the former president, before he moved on to his new ministry. She appreciates the fact that ACSI works to ensure they meet the needs of small schools and large schools and the different needs of schools in every direction, for example Christian schools in the South are very different from Christian schools in the North-East.

Gwen's school is most involved with the Mennonite School Council. Therefore she has a dual perspective and purpose of her role as Christian school leader of an ACSI accredited school, as well. She explained that they use some of the ACSI curriculum because it provides a different perspective than the foundation of their school. Gwen's role is also the Christian school leader of an ACSI mature school who has been accredited for longer than she knows. Her school does the Accreditation by School (ASP) projects. She shared,

> I like the accountability term. I think it does keep us accountable. I think the part with ACSI accreditation that is important as a Christian school and as a Christian school leader to keep mindful of is, it provides us, as Christian schools with some, I can't think of the term I want to use, but just a way of showing that we're legitimate. That we're not just some fly-by-night organization, but to tell parents when they tour the school or when they're interested in the school, "Hey, you know, yes we are accredited by ACSI." And they may not have any idea what that means, but to know that we're accredited is an important piece.

Being a mature school, Gwen noted that they don't have to provide much guidance, but the special projects keeps them growing so they continue to meet ACSI accreditation criteria every seven years. She explained, "ACSI provides us with ways that we can grow and improve so that is also very helpful as well." Being a school leader in an ACSI accredited school, Daniel explained his role is to also help teachers obtain the required ACSI certification for Bible Continuing Education Units (CEU) which the school typically pays for, and he helps provide the time teachers need to take the classes. ACSI leadership competencies is most important in guiding Christian school leadership practices and behaviors pertinent to performance of heads of Christian schools.

Attitude of service. Another subtheme discovered during analysis, subordinate to the

major theme of leadership practices, was attitude of service, which Bartsch (2006) explains "as

God in Christ has served us, so we are called to serve others in our various areas of

responsibility" to which the principal or head of school is called to operate "for this purpose of

benefitting others" (p. 30). Providing opportunities for missions work, service projects, and

service is an integral part of the call and vocation of being the Christian school leader to impact

the creation of an environment where spiritual nurture can occur in Christian schools. Ten of the

11 participants specifically discussed how fostering an attitude of service as a Christian school

leadership practice is perceived to impact the creation of an environment where spiritual nurture

can occur. Darcy said,

> We are mission-minded where every year we do a penny war where kids battle between
>
> classes to see who can bring in the most pennies to be used for different missions. We do
>
> something local one year, something national one year, and then something international
>
> one year. So we have done a lot of things that way and we do a lot of things, particularly,
>
> food drives, help the women shelter, we have a VA home here…a veteran's home.
>
> We've worked with a group that takes care of mentally challenged and go bowling with
>
> them, do a Christmas program for them, and things like that.

In providing opportunities for service projects and missions work, Lois explained how

the 32 week schedule provides parents more time with their children which allows parents and

their children to plan ministry to the world and "serve the Lord where they're planted." She

talked about how one family went to Costa Rica for about a month on a mission trip and how the

school structure allowed them the time and "freedom to be able to do that right in the middle of

the school year." Another family spent two weeks in Zimbabwe. She also shared how a family

works together on "church planning" in the inner city where she lives. Lois described this as a "family ministry extension." As a Christian school leader of a small school, Amber said giving students opportunities to do service in a variety of ways around the school has helped students to be very servant-minded. She said, "If they have a study hall or something or without much to do, or even if they do have some things to do, sometimes they'll give up that time to help another teacher or student." Amber also provides service opportunities for students outside of school where elementary students create Valentine's or Christmas cards or something special for people in nursing homes, packing blessing boxes for the women in the women's shelter, packing backpacks of food or bags full of food for people in need around the county on a monthly basis, and a rescue mission for men who are homeless and out of work. She has also provided service opportunities for students to help at the pregnancy center with the baby bottle campaign and other service projects where students participate in donating clothes and other necessary items. In providing service opportunities, Daisy shared this is definitely the biggest area where school leader and staff have to lead by example. She said, "We want the community to know that we're the hands of Christ. So we're also trying to let the kids know teachers are never going to just stand by while you guys are serving, we're there with you." Daisy expressed, "service is not a one day event to us. It is a mindset and it's what Christ calls us to…we're to give them (students) those opportunities where Christ ministering to those that needed it the most, not the ones that are just easy to minister to." To increase service opportunities for students and staff, Daisy restructured the one day Serve-A-Thon to a service program which takes place throughout the school year called DW Serve. Daisy explained that this program of service throughout the year also sets the expectation for service. Katherine implemented a strategic initiative called service learning where the goal is "to have every single class on campus have at least one service

learning component in it, by three years from now. Katherine shared how everyone in school community is embracing the service component to a greater degree than it used to be because it's connected to the curriculum. She said,

> We have a committee right now that is reading a great book on service learning called *The Complete Guide to Service Learning* and we are going to have a pilot next year and then we're going to prayerfully try to keep expanding that, because we do believe and our mission statement says that we educate students to both serve God and impact the world. So we do think that service is really, really, important and it is a biblical mandate and Jesus came to the world to serve, not to be served. And so we just want to make sure that we're making that more of who we are, I guess, at the very core. That is a Christian school, we bear the name of Christ. Christ came to serve and therefore, we should too.

Harold also strongly believes in "demonstrating the Gospel in action" as a Christian school leader who fosters an attitude of service in school leadership practice. Harold expressed the first thing in fostering an attitude of service is to demonstrate humility to the teachers, the parents, and the community. He shared,

> As a principal, I'm not afraid to say, hey, I screwed up. I'm sorry. When teachers call me on something and it's valid, okay. And you know what? I'm not gonna sit here and justify, and, I wanna be humble. I wanna walk humbly, not as a leader who's lording it over people. So, it's a love thy neighbor if you would, demonstrating the gospel in action. Then back up my words. I want the children as well as the teachers to see the Gospel lived out in my actions.

As the Head of School, Allen created partnerships with six community groups for seven years, and students in grades eight through twelve chose which service partner they wanted to

provide help. Some are located in the inner-city area, and some are with the homeless in nearby

town. Students pick a partner organization for service four times a year. Sixth and seventh grade

students have their own group that they go and partner with for service projects and the

elementary school have two days a year in which they go out and serve. Allen also explained

how it is a requirement for students to serve each other somehow and how as part of their

strategic plan to embed service more in the school's ethos being 60/40 in service where senior

students have to do so many community service hours. Allen is partnering with a missionary

from the local church with extensive experience in working with several different groups and

missionaries in different areas of the world. Allen explained, "The senior class can choose from

one of those places that they serve and go there, and then do something like helping to build or

child evangelism or just cleaning."

As the Christian school leader who provides opportunities for service, Gwen expressed

how service is a huge, huge part of the school community in which she serves because it is an

ACSI accredited mature school where they do massive service projects every seven years. When

Gwen first arrived at Clayton Christian School, the first service project was that every grade

level, had to have some type of service project like Christmas child shoeboxes in the elementary

level to a 10-day cross-cultural mission trip for the senior year students. Gwen continues to

support and implement this type of service at Clayton. There is another aspect of that service

piece which is "learn to serve." Gwen explained,

> So our learn to serve program, in the middle school and the high school years, one of
>
> their Bible classes per week is Learn to Serve. So they can go out, within the school, and
>
> be of individual help to someone. So, for instance, maybe our maintenance supervisor
>
> needs help with the grounds. We had them come into the office and do office things for

us. Or they could go as an entire class into one of the elementary classes, and they do things like study spelling words, work on math facts, works on catechisms, Bible memory, that type of thing. So, yes, service is huge at school.

Lori provided opportunities for local mission projects and opportunities for out of the country missions. She implemented two opportunities for the older students in grades nine through twelve where they can choose to stay in the area and be bussed daily to a mission project to work for a whole week doing different things. They may also choose to go to a camp, bank, or clothing place to help, or they can choose to be on the traveling team where the service area alternates between metropolitan areas, a rural area, to a prison, or to a reservation. To ensure students have an opportunity to go to a different type of area to see and experience various needs, Lori provided opportunities for students to go to Mexico, the Dominican Republic, or Canada. For the middle grades, Lori and staff usually take the seventh and eighth grade students into the community one or two days a week. Students are also required to focus on service projects locally to help meet the required number of service hours depending on the student's grade. Either all or half of the service hours must be in the community. Students in elementary grades have group mission projects at a nursing home or gather to work on and send care packages to service people. Lori feels service and mission is "just living by example." Over the past four years, Harold has initiated a certain amount of community service hours as part of students' graduation requirements where 75% of those hours have to be a ministry that's outside of their local church and the school. Harold said,

A certain percentage of it, they can serve in one of school initiatives; one of the functions that we have that we need volunteers, or they can serve in their nursery at their church or their local youth group in a volunteer capacity. We really felt that we wanted to expose

our students to the value of community involvement. If the student goes on a mission trip, we obviously count that. If they will serve at the local shelter here in town, somewhere nearby, then we count that. We really want them to get out of the Christian bubble, so to speak, and do some service. That's the most specific intentional thing that we do to engage them in the idea of community service, and even global service.

Harold also shared that it is a dream of his to partner with a church and provide a school's missions trip to a foreign country because it is important for students to experience a country that is impoverished, for example, as "it just sort of opens you." Claire incorporates missions' week and connects students with service opportunities in the school, church, and community. Claire said missions' week is an important week where administration, students, and staff really focus on looking at full-time mission work. Claire added, "Now there are parts of that where we talk about our own personal responsibility in the Great Commission and things like that." In fostering an attitude of service to impact the creation of an environment where spiritual nurture can occur as a Christian school leader, Claire feels it is really important to focus on the process of either being a sender or a goer. She said,

> What does it look like to send or to go? I think that's a really important thing is that God has called us to be missionaries in one way or another whether we are…or to participate I should say in missions one way or another. We want to help foster that and develop that so that our students are always thinking about what is their role; what is God calling them to do in making His work known. Then, our thought process is just that idea of service. How can we develop a group of people who are thinking outside of themselves? We live in a time where people are pretty self-centered. We want to have them start thinking

about their school community, their church, community; the community they live in, their

families.

Claire emphasized how she connects students on a regular basis with service

opportunities at the school and elsewhere and how the service requirement for graduation to set

up guidelines for students to go above and beyond. Students participate through Meals-On-

Wheels, in food kitchens, helping to paint the township, marking sewers for service work, and

raking leaves at the school and other places. Claire feels providing an array of service

opportunities for students to do practical things within the community helps them to "recognize

that life is not all about them and how the small things we do can make a difference for people."

Teaching of Christian studies. Under the major theme of leadership practices, another

subtheme was revealed during data analysis, pertained to teaching Christian studies. Several

participants also identified valuing the teaching of Christian Studies in the school as an important

Christian school leadership practice perceived to impact the creation of an environment where

spiritual nurture can occur in ACSI schools. Darcy follows the school motto "growing Christ-

like children" and noted that you cannot do that unless you have a biblical foundation. She

expressed,

It's not just to say memorize this verse and let's pray. So, how do we integrate our faith

and biblical principles in everything we teach? It's been a real burden to get a better

understanding of how do I feed this into my teaching so that God is a part of everything.

We have to think deeper about faith integration.

Darcy's school is working on implementing a curriculum map called Curriculum TRAX

which provides a guideline to help teachers know what faith integration really means. She

emphasized Curriculum TRAX "forces us to think deeper, what does this really mean and how

does this apply to us today." For Amber, valuing the teaching of Christian studies is "prioritizing our spiritual emphasis times" and then modeling "being present," which sends the message to students that they must be present for chapel, prayer groups, and Bible class. Amber said, "I think prioritizing our spiritual emphasis time and making sure the kids know they're expected to be there and participate, is not something to just skip over, just because it's not graded." As a curricular requirement, Katherine helps to schedule and monitor mandatory Bible classes. She also said she is dedicated to hiring Christian teachers who really love God's Word and who do see their subject area through the lens of God's Word. She expressed,

> Our first head of school, used to hold a textbook in one hand and put a Bible on top of it
> with his other hand. And he said, this is how we look at all of our learning, through the
> lens of Scripture. And so, as administrators now, this generation of our school's life, just
> maintaining commitment to that same practice.

> Similarly, Lori expressed the importance of requiring Bible classes, chapels, and

integration so that "truth is incorporated in every aspect of our life." As the school leader, it is also a requirement, as outlined in the school's profile listing, for each teacher to be an active member of a church and have a leadership role in their church, as well. Claire also agreed with the importance of establishing the Word of God as a framework for everything that is taught. Her practice of valuing the teaching of Christian studies is demonstrated by being more of a disciple for staff and students, as well as being a teacher for half of the day. In this dual role as administrator and teacher through "discipling," Claire expressed studying God's Word is important because God's Word speaks to everything. She further explained,

> In my mind, I don't separate out teaching biblical studies from teaching conflict
> resolution; I don't separate out teaching our Bible classes from teaching our science

classes because I think it all points to our Creator, and I believe that all truth is God's truth and that all studies are God's studies.

Claire feels strongly about all subjects being prioritized as she noted, "I don't know that I have setup any policies that would make it be…would make our study of God's Word, our Bible classes any more important than our science class because in my mind it's not."

Intentionally valuing the teaching of Christian studies, Gwen said one of her practices as the school leader is being a part of the Bible curriculum development group representing for her school. She expressed the importance of having a good Bible curriculum and being very "intentional about keeping our Anabaptist heritage strong in that curriculum." She also teaches the base school and attends an Educators Conference every other year to participate in sessions to enhance her personal and professional growth and learning through discussions with other Christian school leaders and educators about a variety of topics, such as how Christian schools handle children and youth with Autism or learning disabilities.

Uniquely, Harold clearly shows valuing the teaching of Christian studies in a document artifact he submitted called "2017 Faculty Handbook" which introduced, outlined, and detailed the Ministry of Teaching for all faculty/staff. The handbook stated,

The ministry of teaching obligates the teacher to assist his or her students in understanding not only mathematics or physics, but how the order and discipline of mathematics or physics reveals the mind of God. It obligates one not only to instruct in geography and history, but to inculcate the faith by helping the students know that God created the mountains, the sea, the rivers, the deserts, the forests, the plains and all the creatures that inhabit them, and to learn that human discoveries, empires, conflicts and social movements are measured by the divinely ordained order. The ministry of teaching

requires one not only to help students acquire skill in spelling, reading, grammar, and writing, but to understand that human language is a primary means by which students might explore the wonders of poetry and narrative and Sacred Scripture itself—all of which indirectly or directly disclose salvation history…Simply put, they teach the faith by modeling the faith and by modeling faithfulness.

The handbook also details requirements teachers must have, such as subscription to the school's Articles of Faith, give a godly example both at school and away, must teach truth and avoid falsehood, must minister to their students by providing them with faith experiences, must lead the youth in prayer, praise, and mercy, and must model the Christian life by being active in their own church community. This handbook is also provided as a resource and source of information for faculty/staff at Harold's school.

Provide time/resources. Another subtheme emerged during data analysis, secondary to the major theme of leadership practices was provide time and/or resources. As the school leader, Darcy tries to provide as much good and relevant material, books, or daily devotionals for the teachers and encourage them to use resources she provides, but she expresses "it is up to the teachers to use them." For this reason, Darcy's vision for the teachers is encouraging "healthy hearts". She explained, "We have to have healthy hearts before we can do what God wants us to do." Darcy also requires teachers to be able to "deem the tools" and apply Christian principles to the classroom which she feels helped some of the teachers in being more diligent in their professional growth. Lois relied on the personal relationships she built with the teachers through weekly check-ins during faculty meetings and monitoring each teacher's work load to ensure time and resources of spiritual nurture were provided and used by teachers. In addition, Lois said "our structure of part-time allows time for me to keep a finger on the pulse of each of the

teachers." Being a small school with limited resources, Amber utilized and relied on group

devotions, free webinars, and seminars to provide time and resources of spiritual nurture for

teachers. She noted, "We start the year with an all-school prayer during our in-service day and a

devotional together to kind of set things on the right path for the year. Similarly, Katherine

utilized daily morning devotions and holds teachers accountable to attend devotions. She stated,

"We do really take that seriously and we put that time there for that very reason. We discourage

teachers from having other meetings at that time and we ourselves try to model that by showing

up at devotions every day, too." Katherine called this devotion time, the "great equalizer" where

"you get into that room and it doesn't matter what anyone's role is; just reading God's Word and

praying." It is also important to Katherine as the school leader, to provide books and materials

for teachers to read during the summer that are spiritually nurturing, such as books on joy and the

books of the Bible, such as Philippians. They also do "handbook talks" about how the morning

devotions are not supposed to "supplant anyone's individual devotions at home with the Lord."

Harold also scheduled and utilized devotions and prayer time for spiritual nurture.

Harold said, "For teachers, it would be making sure that we have that devotional set aside each

day that we as a teacher body pray. Take the opportunity to pray." Harold also noted that Bible

teaching time and chapel times are not only important for students, but for teachers as well. He

stated, "This is important that the entire school attends." Scheduling time for spiritual nurture is

also very important for Claire in her leadership role. Within their school calendar, time is

deliberately set aside for opportunities for teachers to be interacting with the students in

spiritually relevant ways, such as spiritual emphasis week where teachers work with students in

"discipling them" and "spending time getting to know them in a different way." Claire also

shared how they make time within their daily schedules "for teachers to be able to provide time

for themselves and also some students." Claire feels providing time for spiritual nurture to "happen" is the most important administrative practice they have made which "is to not just say we think it's important, but by providing time for it to happen…we can say it's important." She shared, "we can give teachers all tools, but if we don't provide the time within the schedule for it to happen, it doesn't." As an ACSI school, Claire also expressed teachers participated regularly in the training which provided them with the tools and resources to be able to "engage students in some of those biblically relevant ideas or topics within the classroom." The ACSI training was extremely valuable, Claire said, because it helped teachers feel more confident, particularly those who received their teacher education, experience and/or training from a public university or public school and were not trained in biblical integration.

As the spiritual leader of a Christian school, Daisy learned it is important for the leader to be focused on the things God wants you to be focused on "because it's really easy to get caught up in everything that's going on." She expressed how the leader's personal time in the work and in reading is vital to be able to lead teachers effectively. Daisy explained if teachers think that you, as the spiritual leader, are not resourceful and current in your leadership practices and are "doing the same old, whether it's spiritually, educationally, they're not going to follow you." This means, according to Daisy, that teachers are not leading the students spiritually, "all that trickle-down effect." Gwen agrees in that the leader must nurture himself/herself spiritually first, to be in tune with your needs and with the teachers' needs. Time off, such as summer breaks are "great time" to rejuvenate and intentionally reflect. Gwen asked teachers to journal their reflections throughout the year and focus at the end of the year, on ways they renew their spirit which looked different in each person. This journaling piece is the way Gwen provided time and resources of spiritual nurture by staying in tune with teachers.

To ensure time and resources of spiritual nurture are provided, Lori's school requires parents and families to pay a material fee and "with that we're able to make sure that we are purchasing materials for the teachers that do give them biblical resources instead of just making them do that all on their own." With the material funds, the state textbook money that the school has is used toward gym equipment and consumable materials. The school budget funds are also used for the administrative team to attend the leadership conference and teachers to attend the fall trainings and early childhood conference through ACSI. Lori also sends teachers to trainings in their particular subject or special project training. Funding and budgeting at South Central Christian Academy ensures time and resources for professional development. Daniel explained, "I don't think my answer is as specific to spiritual nurturing as much as it is just professional development in general." Daniel established financial provisions where every faculty member receives $1500 per year of credit toward professional development. Daniel expounded,

> So whether that's college classes or whether it's online training, or whether it's a local seminar, if we are sending a teacher to get the training to teach his/her class, those things can all be covered with their $1500 per year stipend. That's how most of us, as we have worked at South Central for long enough, like myself, that's how I funded my Master's degree a year ago. If they're doing something with ACSI or with our local Bible colleges, the financial provision is going to cover that. Then also, to go with that, if a teacher needs to do a professional workshop that's going to take them away from school during the school day, we won't make them take a personal day or a sick day. We'll give them that as a paid day to go to get the professional development.

A substitute teacher is provided for the teacher so that the teacher is not charged a sick day or vacation day. Although there are common school leadership practices in this subtheme, each participant shared their unique perspective and voice about the phenomenon.

      Guidance for staff. Another subsequent subtheme revealed during data analysis within the major theme of leadership practices pertained to guidance for staff. Participants shared various perspectives of providing guidance for staff as they work through the implementation of classroom issues such as behavior management based on a sound group of law and gospel. Five participants provided guidance by being available to talk and meet regularly with teachers individually or as a staff during weekly staff meetings to discuss school culture. If there is a specific issue a teacher is experiencing, Lois shared she will meet with the teacher and write up a plan, agree on the plan, and set a timeline to check for progress. She also shared an experience where she assigned a classroom aide to assist the teacher in addressing an issue, which helped the teacher to feel supported. Daisy provides guidance and support by "first, being there and being a good listener." She said, "Sometimes they're going to come to you and they're just going to be so frustrated, not necessarily frustrated with the student, but just frustrated of like how do I reach this kid?" Daisy feels listening first is most important so that you, as the leader, can offer helpful feedback and suggestions. As the school leader, Daisy shared you may have to conduct an impromptu observation to help support the teacher and assist with handling students in the classroom, which helps the teacher to "know they're not alone." Comparably, Gwen shared the importance of consistent and open communication with not only the teachers, but with parents and students. As the Christian school leader, Gwen also expressed the importance of modeling ways to communicate with someone you may be having an issue with. She said, "I think modeling that provides them, not necessarily the words to say, but equipping them with

some type of principle or guide for what to say and how to say it." Instead of "coming at them."

Gwen explained it is key to remind and guide school staff to follow Matthew 18 principle and

model restorative peace. Lori's "open-door policy" allows teachers to "have access" to her when

they're having a problem or dealing with a student issue. She also provides guidance by

supporting teachers during biweekly departmental meetings, specifically for elementary, middle

and high school teachers to discuss their program and students who may need additional help

academically and behaviorally. Likewise, Daniel also facilitates and schedules weekly staff

meetings for whole staff, grade level or departmental meetings where they discuss the "nuts and

bolts issues or updating teachers on a security issue or a safety issue."

    Claire's school has developed a discipline system built on restoration and the process of

reconciliation. As the school leader, Claire consistently leads and guides teachers to a "place of

restoration" to try and minimize and reduce the amount of time teachers spend with discipline

issues which she feels are "distractions.", "This process of reconciliation is very important,"

Claire explained,

> Students need to be able to own what they have done. They need to be able to speak that
>
> and they need to be able to speak their need for forgiveness and my teachers need to offer
>
> that with their work. We have worked through a process of helping both the student and
>
> the teacher in that reconciliation process. The beauty of it is when the circumstances are
>
> turned around because our teachers at times need to go through that process with the
>
> student as well.

    It is a training and discipleship process that the students and teachers experience intended

to be restorative and as a result, Claire conveyed, "we don't have a lot of big discipline issues."

Restoration is also a concept of discipline which Katherine, Allen, and Gwen implemented at

their schools in providing guidance to staff. Katherine changed the culture of her school with the implementation of the restorative discipline and responsive classroom programs. Katherine expressed,

> Teachers felt they didn't really have any tools that they could use in the moment to really bring students back. So we realized some changes had to be made. The responsive classroom, which is not a Christian program, but I think there's a lot about it that is consistent with biblical principles.

Katherine provided teachers with the book *Teaching Children to Care* which they used as a basis and restructured the school's discipline system. Following the suggestion of a colleague she visited for several hours and who was the head of school at a Mennonite school nearby, Katherine provided the teachers at her school with a Christian resource book which she described as a "quick read, probably about 60 pages, but it was excellent" called *Restorative Discipline.* She shared,

> I agreed with him (colleague and head of school at the nearby Mennonite school)…I just thought this is a culture changer when you have a book like this and you follow it and you know, because it does. It becomes about restoration as opposed to punishment or anything else and it's such a learning process. And so yeah, I just thought that was an excellent book and it just seems so Gospel-centered, so we're working with those two resources now.

> Allen also guides staff in the restorative approach to discipline. He said,

> God takes us exactly where we are and helps us restore ourselves. So we look at it the same way for our students. We have a handbook that has the guidelines of how we're supposed to behave and how we're not supposed to behave at the school. Things that are

acceptable for this community, and things that are not. So, in that explanation to

particular students when the discipline is there, or we acknowledge that there's been a

breaking of that community pact, we discuss with them, what this is, and that is the way

that we want to do our community. That student and that teacher are both discussing and

come up with a plan of how they restore themselves back to the community. There's

always a discussion in every situation or issue about restoration back to the community.

When handling more "egregious" issues, Allen shared that parents and the student meet with him

to discuss the restorative discipline plan which helps to establish unity. Gwen's focus on

restorative peace and restorative discipline equipped students, parents and staff with problem-

solving skills. She provided teachers with professional development in the restorative discipline

process to help teachers and students in restoring peace and building students' character.

Five of the 11 participants conveyed the use of Scriptures in providing guidance for staff

as they work through the implementation of classroom issues, such as behavior management

based on a sound group of law and gospel as a spiritual leader of a Christian school. Darcy

indicated problems with inconsistency among teachers in method of discipline and increased

problems of students displaying disrespect toward staff she felt it necessary to implement a

schoolwide behavior management initiative based on and supported by Scriptures. Darcy shared

the behavior management initiative mirrored what she learned during one of her classes on

building school culture at the ACSI Leadership U. She explained,

We are the warriors and our acronym is going to be *CHARGE*. We haven't completely

completed it; our *C* is going to be character or courage; our *H* is honor; our *A* is attitude;

R is responsibility; our *G* we have not agreed on grace or gratitude and then our *E*

is…may be excellence. Still in a working progress. So that even the teachers will be

evaluated based on this. It will be our complete school culture. What is your

responsibility? Then they'll be evaluated…its' accountability.

Just like a friend of hers, Darcy also planned to build the school culture around the theme

CHARGE and "used Deuteronomy 6 where Moses instructed the people to put your word in your

heart and on your head and on your hand so that it's very visible and also very much

repeated…and it becomes a part of who we are in our school culture." Daisy indicated teaching

students in the Word and using Scripture when handling student discipline issues as an important

part of providing guidance. Gwen also indicated she uses Scripture and models biblical

principles when guiding students and teachers through classroom issues. Likewise, Harold uses

Scriptures and directs teachers to refer to the Scriptures as well. He shared,

I'm always telling my teachers, take everything you do discipline wise back to the

Scriptures. The kids need to know how this fits into Scripture. They can't refute

Scripture. You need to bring the Bible into what happened in the class and why is this a

problem? Why is this a concern? Put it back into the Scripture which again points to the

heart, which then points back to the cross. So, I'm making sure—I'm passionate about

making sure my teachers go back to the Scriptures when there's an issue with the kids.

The importance of providing guidance for staff as they work through the implementation of

classroom issues based on a sound group of law and gospel is clearly indicated by all

participants. It is also evident that establishing a school culture based on Scripture is as equally

important to many of the participants regardless of the type of school in which they serve.

Fulfill the mission. Within the major theme of leadership practices, fulfill the mission is

additional subtheme revealed during data analysis. With the integration of mission and Christian

school leadership practices, 4 of the eleven participants discussed Christian school leadership

practices which fulfills the school mission. Three of the participants indicated the importance of being authentic in that their leadership practices are aligned with the mission and they're saying and doing what they've assured the parents and families who have chosen Christian education for their children. As a graduate and current Christian school leader of her school, Daisy feels her perspective is unique. She is conscientious of making sure that her actions and decisions are not for any "selfish gain" by staying focused on what God's Will is for the school, so that when she makes "those really tedious day-to-day decisions or the really big decisions" that affect the partnership with their families and how students learn, those decisions are "what God's plans are for the school." Lois agrees as she feels it is her "job to make sure everything that we're doing is in line with our mission and that it's furthering our mission in order to meet the goals that we've set forth for the parents." Similarly, Darcy explained,

> I just really strive, that we are, who we say we are. Are we indeed doing what we say we are doing? And that, I guess, I'll say, I don't want false advertising. You know that we say what we're doing but we're not.

> In sharing her perspective, Gwen expressed that her daily decision-making practices fulfill the mission to impact the creation of an environment where spiritual nurture can occur. She expounded,

> Our mission is developing lives of consequence for the kingdom of God and I think the decision making that goes on, on a daily basis whether it's a curriculum decision or a faculty decision or practices decision, whatever it may be; whatever we're doing in the school. Or I'm dealing with students with the behavioral issues or some type of social conflict? I want to make sure I'm developing that life of consequence. Am I building character?" What skills am I teaching them as a Christian that they will be able to take

from this that will impact them for the long term? Not just let's just fix short term, but

what am I doing, seeing that they're reaching that for the long term.

It is evident in participants' responses the importance of fulfilling the mission which guides

Christian school leadership practices to meet the goals of parents, families, and students.

Lead by example. The final subtheme to emerge within the first major theme of

leadership practices during data analysis was lead by example. Four of the 11 participants,

particularly expressed their perspectives in this area of Christian school leadership practice. The

most popular response in leading by example for all four participants was being readily available

for others: always willing to listen, no matter how busy you may be with the daily

responsibilities as the school leader. Daisy shared,

> It's really important to let the teachers and the students know that you're there for them,
>
> because it's really easy to kind of just put off a teacher or a student if you're in like the
>
> moment of trying to get something done and they come walking into your office.

She said there were times she had to apologize to someone for not being as available, "especially

when the person is there in front you".

Lois said a combination of servant leadership and being very approachable is important

in leading by example. In addition to being available, Lois also expressed, "I think modeling,

first of all my own faith is growing and that my dependence on the Lord is evident to the

teachers. But then to show I'm constantly growing and learning, as well and yeah, I make

mistakes." Darcy noted leading by example is a major role as a Christian school leader. She

also agreed a Christian school leader's own personal and spiritual growth is vital in being an

example by "building your own life, that is critical." Similarly, she expressed being available is a

critical part of leading by example. She explained, "I have learned just stop and do it right

then…talking to a person so I don't forget. Taking care of it, right now. Being that kind of example." Likewise, Gwen shared the way the Christian school leader guides and leads others, particularly when the school leader is approached by staff who may be seeking help, is definitely an important part of leading by example. Gwen strongly feels having enough time and/or making the time for others is "kind of a necessary part of the job to lead by example." She also shared another necessary part of leading by example, which is "doing the small, little things." Gwen expressed,

> Maybe it's silly like ensuring that I'm doing daily devotions. So, you know, they see that and they want to be a part of that or they want to do that themselves. Making sure I'm attending church on a regular basis and that I'm being prayerful, praying with them first when they come with a concern.

Bartsch (2006) explained, the head of school as the spiritual leader has a key role in building the school community with additional factors such as leading by example. As indicated by the participants, leading by example is a necessary factor to impact the creation of an environment where spiritual nurture can occur in Christian schools.

Theme Two: Theological Beliefs

The second major theme developed understanding of research question two that sought to discover how Christian school leaders perceive theological beliefs impacts the creation of an environment where spiritual nurture can occur in ACSI affiliated schools. Participant responses describe the application of theological beliefs into all areas of the school community of faith. Christian school leaders shared ways in which they develop and lead the school community of faith with a sound understanding of theology and education. Participant descriptions of theological beliefs revealed 32 codes which developed into four subthemes. Four subthemes

were described from the data associated with theme two, theological beliefs, which are: engage

biblical studies, support students/staff biblical studies, scriptural basis for decision-making, and

increase staff understanding of decision-making.

Engage biblical studies. One of the first subthemes revealed within the major theme of

theological beliefs during analysis, was engaging biblical studies. Eight of the 11 participants

shared engaging biblical studies by being intentional in adopting and implementing a Bible

curriculum and assisting and monitoring teachers in biblical integration within every subject.

Lois shared, "we are very intentional in that everything we do is founded in the Word of God."

She continued,

> Our ultimate goal is the discipleship of students, so everything that they teach is founded
>
> from a biblical worldview, from a biblical perspective and intentional in choosing our
>
> curriculum. We don't believe that education is ever in neutral. It needs a spiritual
>
> context. So, we are very intentional in how we choose our curriculum. We use a lot of
>
> Christian-based curriculum, because of our structure.

Lois also added she's very intentional in choosing teachers not only for their teaching

credentials, but also for their ability to mentor and disciple students. Lois said, "We look for a

specific type of teacher." Similarly, Katherine shared, "We really want teachers to be teaching

from a biblical worldview in all their classes." Katherine also shared engaging biblical studies

with faculty included book of the Bible studies and reading books on the specific topics. For

example, she explained,

> So, this summer, our leadership team is reading Philippians, and we're supposed to read
>
> through it at least four times and we'll be discussing that. And all of our faculty and staff
>
> are reading books on the topic of joy. So we had four Christian books they could choose

from. The reason we're reading Philippians, because it has so much to do with joy. So, we'll be discussing that when we all come back in August. We'll have one day over lunch where we're going to split into different groups and just discuss that.

Based on the philosophy that "all truth is God's truth," Allen ensures everything is essentially taught from a biblical worldview as the faculty and staff embody the same Christian worldview. Allen emphasized every staff member at the school has to be an active follower of Christ. Although there is no "litmus test" to make sure every staff member is a follower of Christ, Allen stated, "You can tell if somebody is not very grace-oriented." During curriculum mapping, Allen noted that every subject is reviewed based on Christian worldview and being Gospel-centric. He explained,

Within our curriculum mapping, starting our third year, now, that we evaluate every subject, a new subject every year. So about three years ago, we did Bible and Christian worldview. There are the parts of the biblical story from creation, the fall, redemption, reconciliation. And so, somewhere there's something included in there. And we're very Gospel-centric. At some point, we want all of our students to be able to articulate, acknowledge the Gospel, articulate the Gospel, and share the Gospel. Biblical memory goes through that. So, every single thing has been developed that includes Christian worldview and Gospels somewhere in the mapping that points to that. That's also part of the teacher's evaluation when I go in and complete their self-evaluation using professional, personal and Christian leadership goals each year. Then we measure that through the worldview evaluations that we also do twice a year.

In walk-through observations, Gwen voiced that the main component she looks for is also bible integration being incorporated throughout and not "like injecting a Scripture verse that

doesn't fit" in the lesson and only used for the sake of the observation. Gwen shared, in this case, the Scripture seems "forced." Lori also mentioned along with integrating Bible classes, she ensures that Bible principles are incorporated in regular classes as a way of engaging in biblical studies. In overseeing the Bible curriculum as the school leader, Harold shared,

> We work as a school to be sure to review our Bible curriculum. To see what is being taught. Making sure the teachers we have are passionate and faithful followers of Jesus Christ and instilling in them that message and that passion. And if they see it in me, they will – if they see that's what the leader's concerned with and passionate about, they will mirror that and they will go in that direction.

> Likewise, Claire communicated, "We have worked very hard in order to be able to teach

all of our disciplines through the lens of the redemption of Jesus Christ." Claire noted that this is an important part of what they do which is to help teachers "lay the Gospel over whatever is happening within the classroom." She stated,

> We want our students to be able to see that all things have been created by God for His purpose and for our good. As we study math and social studies and all of those things, we are very careful to be able to help our students see first of all the creative order of God in that, but also to be able to see how He intends those disciplines to be used in this world that He has created.

> Engaging biblical studies also included, as Claire expressed, connecting students to

service and mission whenever possible to help students not only grow in their knowledge, but also grow in love and in their service in Jesus Christ. In addition, Claire noted, "We also provide opportunities for them to connect what they've learned to practical applications of that, both locally and foreign missions."

Seven of the 11 participants discussed the importance of incorporating daily Bible class. Darcy shared Bible classes are "a routine part of their classes within their school day." Comparably, Lois indicated their progression of Bible classes into Bible learning. She explained,

> The students all have a Bible class where they have a planned progression for Bible classes being only secondary starting with seventh grade through twelfth grade. Seventh and eighth grade start with a combination of introduction to worldview and curriculum during Bible class and then a lot of personal discipleship for growth in their faith. Then in high school, they do a cycle of learning how hermeneutic kinds of classes with a very in-depth study course. And then a year of church history and then survey year of the Bible in addition to Worldview teaching.

Similarly, Katherine expressed how all of their students take a mandatory Bible class in Pre-Kindergarten through grade twelve as one of their subjects. Moreover, Katherine shared that the Bible classes are not isolated or a "silo kind of thing." Additionally, she noted, "our high school students have summer reading as well, so between their Bible classes that they take in high school and their summer reading, they will have read through the entire Bible in their high school years." Along with the necessary Bible classes, Daisy feels that it is vital to incorporate additional resources to minister to their diverse student population. Biblical studies is an area that has undergone changes as Daisy explained, "because of our school culture." She shared,

> So when I went there and even when I started teaching years ago, our school culture was not very diverse at all. And then really in the last five or six years, God has just done a really cool thing because we are right outside of the city, which is a completely failing school district. But when I was reading a book a couple summers ago that said only like

5% of Christian schools have Hispanic students, I was like oh, okay wow. Well I guess

we fall in that 5%. So what that's done for us is, we are trying to continually evaluate

ourselves; are we reaching the kid; because every kid is at a different point in their

spiritual journey, but are we also meeting them where they are culturally? So it's kind of

a fine balance for us; because we're trying to use any resource from ACSI or from any

other things associated with ACSI to help meet the needs of our unique school

population. In that to the east of us we have some kids that live on a farm and to the west

of us, we have kids that live in pretty difficult city and they sit in class together with each

other. So, what is God trying to teach them when they're both sitting in the same Bible

class? Or in the same Chapel? When they're going home at night, it's just completely

different lives. We have a really wide mix, we're trying to minister to.

Daisy noted they've benefited the most from the ACSI professional development for teachers,

the board, and administration to help equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills to meet

the needs of the school's diverse population. Bible classes are also necessary at Lori's school as

well as integration in their regular classes of biblical principles. Similarly, Claire incorporates a

scope and sequence for biblical understanding within their Bible classes, which she also

indicated in a document artifact, "Bible Evaluations," which she submitted (See Appendix F).

Claire expressed,

We're taking our kids from the elementary school through the high school so that they

are biblically literate when they graduate from here. We want them to have had a full

understanding of the Scriptures from Genesis through Revelation recognizing God's

work and his thread of redemption through all of that.

In addition, Claire explained how biblical understanding is most important,

Leading our kids to their senior year to a class from Apologetics; being able to stand and

argue what it is they believe; not just based on their feelings about things, but based on

the truth of what God has revealed both in the world and also in Scripture.

Beginning with Kindergarten through grade twelve, Claire's document artifact, "Bible

Evaluation," shows main themes and learning objectives with corresponding activities for Bible

classes in each grade level. The activities are aligned with the Bible lesson objectives for

students to demonstrate their understanding of the Bible lesson, as Claire explained above.

Students' progress and learning are evaluated based on the listed goals and/or objectives for each

grade level. Allen also elaborated on being very involved in the Bible classes that are taught in

every grade, Kindergarten through grade twelve along with monitoring and making sure that

every single subject is being taught from a Christian worldview.

Chapel services are another way Christian school leaders demonstrate the practice of

engaging biblical studies. Seven of the 11 participants noted how Chapel also helps the school

leader to engage biblical studies. Darcy shared that students are not only learning about Bible

with regular Bible classes, but also through Chapel on Wednesdays, too. Amber also noted

incorporating weekly chapels as a necessary way to engage biblical studies. With a diverse

student population, Daisy stressed the importance of Chapel in bringing everyone together in

Christian ministry. Through Chapel services, Gwen explained, "students participate and we

bring in speakers and things like that." Gwen also shared "there are often classes that will open

it with some devotional skit or thought or song, a worship period." About two out of the four

weeks of every month, Gwen facilitates an extension of Chapel service where students meet in

small groups. While in the small groups Gwen guides what she wants students to do. The small

groups are student-led as they discuss a topic or work on an activity that Gwen has assigned for

them to complete. Likewise, Harold said he also follows up with children and youth after "Chapel service and a Chapel speaker who may not have come across clearly or sometimes can get really on a side point".   In this case, Harold expressed as the school leader, he feels it is his responsibility to "bring it back" and by "summarizing how does this relate to the Gospel?" Harold also explained on the last Chapel of each month students memorize monthly godly characteristic verses that they recite. He submitted a document artifact showing the three year rotation list of monthly Godly characteristics with corresponding Scriptures for grades Kindergarten through eighth grade. Although the primary way Daniel engages in biblical studies is "using Scripture while disciplining and dealing with student discipline as character issue of some sort," he also makes sure he speaks in Chapel services a couple times a year to engage biblical studies. In addition, Claire noted that weekly Chapel services are incorporated to provide biblical understanding and a gospel understanding. Furthermore, she expressed,

> Chapel is a worship service for them as well as to be able to provide just relevant Bible teaching for them in some of the hard areas of life that they are facing. We use that as an opportunity to deal with some of those difficult social issues that are so prevalent right now.

Five of the 11 participants noted morning devotions and prayer groups help engage biblical studies. Amber said for teachers "we have weekly staff devotions and we pray together and encourage each other" and for students "we have high school and middle school prayer groups," which take place outside of the regular classroom time. Amber also shared students are given leadership roles in the classroom for prayer and leading different activities within their classes. Daily morning faculty devotions also occur in Katherine's school, where she and the

faculty read through the Bible a few chapters each day and incorporate discussions around the Scriptures. Gwen incorporates prayer in every meeting. She said,

> As a school community as a whole, I think prayer is a big part of everything we do as a school community. It's incorporated into everything, whether it's a meeting or a program, even if it's a private meeting in my office with the family or a student. Prayer either starts it off or it's ending it.

Similarly, Lori incorporates prayer throughout the week and in monthly staff and faculty meetings which also focus on Scripture. Lori expressed,

> In those weekly meetings we talk about the business of the school, but we also have somebody designated each week to bring Scripture and prayer to the meeting. We also have our Bible study going on in addition to our regular faculty and staff meetings.

Harold leads teachers in prayer and devotions, and he also oversees the teachers who lead devotions and prayer, as well. He said,

> We share devotions. So every other week I'm teaching. Whether it's going through the book of the Bible, whether it's going through a study. So I don't micromanage in telling teachers what they can do or can't do. But you know if sometimes devotions get a little off track I may bring it back around. Definitely leading the teachers in prayer. I will pray with teachers individually, I will pray with them corporately; and with the parents, as well. Wanting to open in prayer, when I have parents there, always presenting the Gospel message somehow, somewhere.

Support students/staff biblical studies. Within the second major theme of theological beliefs, another underlying subtheme revealed during data analysis was encouraging and supporting students and teachers in their biblical studies. This area of Christian school

leadership practice is an additional factor which the spiritual head of the school needs to build up

the school family as an educational community (Bartsch, 2006). In supporting students in their

biblical studies, four participants noted they have assigned students in a leadership capacity.

Amber stated, "Kids are given leadership roles in the classroom for prayer and leading different

activities within their classes." Students in Amber's school also lead middle and high school

prayer groups which take place outside of regular classrooms. Correspondingly, Allen

implements student-led and adult-facilitated discipleship groups where "they take the theoretical

and they talk about it practically". Allen stated, "We have an entire program to do that." Also,

Lori shared she provides some student-led opportunities for "honor society as well as student

council where the students have time to talk and meet about those things and acting out and

living out their biblical principles." In addition, Lori noted the school's major emphasis on

service where students have to do so many service hours at the school and in the community, as

another way for students to live out their biblical principles. Likewise, Claire encourages and

supports students by providing opportunities for student-led discipleship meetings and Bible

studies. She shared the most important part of encouraging students and teachers in their biblical

studies is,

> The understanding of my role as a discipler. It's a matter of helping our students and
>
> teachers as well be, I hate to use this word, but self-feeders, be self-learners of the Word
>
> and of those biblical concepts. Providing students and providing teachers opportunities
>
> to an encouragement in their own personal study and in their own personal search for
>
> what it is that God is calling them to do and those things.

Claire encourages students to do Bible studies and to lead those Bible studies that take place during their lunch time and the student-led discipleship meetings that "would be an opportunity for them to encourage one another to walk alongside of one another."

Furthermore, in encouraging and supporting teachers in their biblical studies, four of the 11 participants expressed how they encourage, provide time and funding for, and/or closely monitor teachers to help them meet the ACSI certification requirements in biblical studies. Along with facilitating a weekly Bible study with the teachers to study Books of the Bible, Darcy also supports teachers by helping them achieve their ACSI certification in biblical studies. As an ACSI member school, all of the teachers at Darcy's school have to achieve a standard certification for ACSI which requires Continuing Education Units (CEU) in biblical studies. If she can afford to do so, Darcy shared, she will send teachers to the ACSI workshops. In addition, she said, "ACSI has forums that we get a lot of biblical teaching through them; we go every year." She continued, "I give them (teachers) a lot of ideas. They have to get credits to obtain a certification from ACSI." Still in the developing stages with teacher support of biblical studies, Lois shared "we offer a lot of the ACSI teaching opportunities with continuing education, but also online seminars that are available to them." In addition, Lois noted,

> We're encouraging all of them (teachers) to attend a worldview workshop and they have
>
> quite a few in our area that come around during the year, and we're hoping to get all of
>
> our teachers there. Over a two year period, we would like to require, or to have them to
>
> attend one of the Christian worldview conferences. It's good and we're deciding if it will
>
> be required. The worldview, because it's such a core part of our vision.

Along with daily devotions she has with the teachers before students arrive, Gwen also encourages and supports teachers in their biblical studies by diligently helping teachers achieve ACSI certification at her school, as well. She said,

> Teachers have to have Continuing Education Units (CEU) in Bible as part of our certification through ACSI. So, that's something that they have to do and definitely a way that they're almost forced to continue in some form of biblical study or devotion time.

Gwen says she also really works hard with the teachers to build a community, particularly in the elementary school which, she says, "seems to be a bit divided with lower elementary teachers and upper elementary teachers." She said, "They tend to stay within their groups and I'd like it if they could come together…to build one another up and hold one another accountable." In addition, Gwen also does book clubs to encourage and support teachers in their biblical studies. She shared,

> Oftentimes, it's a book that is secular in nature and is taken from an educational standpoint, but is a way that we can also talk about how that certain particular topic, whatever it may be, is in fact the God-ordained item that we're called to do as Christians, and just because it's written secularly doesn't mean we can't make note of that.

> As the Christian school leader of an ACSI accredited school, Daniel encourages and supports teachers in their biblical studies not only by providing time, but also pay to help teachers to obtain CEUs toward ACSI certification. He explains,

> ACSI has requirements for Bible Continuing Education Units (CEU). The teacher has to fulfill that, and we typically help pay for it; or we help provide the time that they need to

take to go take a class somewhere. That's not necessarily something that we are

intentional about as much as it is we just are supportive in that way.

With their particular method of education called the Principle Approach, Daniel also shared he

facilitates biblical studies through mandatory in-services and trainings over the summer. In

describing the Principal Approach, he said, "It has the elements of classical education, but it's a

pretty distinctive philosophy and methodology which we'll be doing some training in that and

that involves a lot of biblical study, as well."

Four of the 11 participants shared how weekly staff devotions also encourage and support

teachers in their biblical studies. Amber shared, "We have weekly staff devotions and we pray

together and encourage each other there." Likewise, Gwen said,

We have devotions every morning when we gather before the students come. We gather

as a faculty and we're usually going through some course or some book. Whether it's a

book of the Bible or maybe it's a person of the Bible study or something like that.

Along with teachers integrating the Bible into their daily classes and teaching, Lori noted that

teachers also have devotions in their homeroom each morning and they open with prayer, as

well. She noted devotion in her response for students and staff.

Scriptural basis for decision-making. The third subsequent subtheme under the major

theme of theological beliefs discovered during data analysis was scriptural basis for decision-

making. Eight of the 11 participants emphasized it is vital for Christian school leaders to

immerse themselves in independent, personal Bible study and to be grounded in the Word of

God daily in order to incorporate a biblical foundation of the Holy Scriptures in their decision-

making. Darcy said,

I have to do a lot of independent Bible study, on my own. And have…for years. This is

a critical part of who I am. But it takes a lot of constant, constant study. We've been

doing a series in our Sunday school with Randy Smith in Florida. It's called, *One Hour,*

One Book. He takes one book of the Bible and for an hour, he just gives you the nitty-

gritty foundation of it. And it's just a very helpful foundational work. So, I refer to him

a lot. I'm studying Galatians with the teachers. I've started watching his videos. So, I

feel like I'm going to seminary somewhat. He's very literal and he talks about things

I've never heard of. It helps me look at scripture from different ways.

Darcy also expressed the importance of having Christian, spiritual friends that can give wise

counsel or know any scripture to help especially when she is struggling with a scripture or with a

decision she needs to make. In trying to live by the biblical principles of God's Word, Lois

shared, "In all of my decisions, I try to base them off of the truth. Just the truth in God's Word."

In addition, she said, "Especially when it comes to these major decisions, looking at the

principles that we not only are, but are our statement of faith for the school." Amber expressed

the importance of personal prayer and really studying, knowing and measuring the curriculum

and materials against "what scripture teaches and what the Bible says." Likewise, Katherine

emphasized,

Well, first and foremost, I need to be in God's Word every day. Just so that's molding

the way my mind thinks about things. You know, I believe that the way that our minds

are transformed is by just filling our minds with the Scriptures and knowing what it says.

So for instance, I was reading in Proverbs 27 and there's just a lot of talk there about wise

decisions, and the prudent person, and all of that. So, I think that's the first place.

Similarly, Allen also noted, "Well, I would hope that's innate in me. That it's so engrained in my worldview that I would be making decisions that are wise based on biblical thought and action." As the school leader, Allen said his particular role is to also make sure they're actually "following what the Bible has outlined", mainly, in how to live their lives. He continued, "We refuse to put the Bible in and apply it inappropriately, or superficially, because it's unnecessary." In a constant effort to follow the example of Jesus Christ, Gwen emphasized,

> The word that immediately comes to mind for me in our decision-making, in my decision-making, and in decision-making as our group, as our administrative team, is integrity. Jesus made decisions and did things with integrity. There was no doubt, no shadow of doubt that what He had to do and how He had to do it and the decisions that He made, He did righteously and with integrity. And I think that that's one thing that we always have at the back of our minds, which is: Am I making this decision in spur-of-the- moment? Am I thinking it through? Am I making a good biblical decision? I would ask, I don't want to sound, you know, hokey, with my answer, but certainly making decisions from the standpoint of how would Jesus handle this? How can I do this with integrity? How can I do it with respect for all involved? Am I following biblical principles?

Through personal and private Bible study and prayer, Harold expressed how each day starts out in the Word and in prayer. He stated, "The more stressful the situation, the more I am in prayer." He continued to share, "Sometimes when things are peaceful and running well, that kind of gets put aside and you can't allow that to be put aside." There are times when Harold stopped and prayed during a meeting with teachers or while working with the Board of Ed. He said that this is necessary, at times to get everyone "back on focus and get a right attitude." Claire also

emphasized the importance of the school leader being self-aware of his/her Christian worldview in decision-making. Claire indicated,

> I would tell you that part of that is for me personally having a Christian worldview that recognizes that God's Word is my own…Is the only rule for faith in life. Although, the specifics of my personal situation or the school situation may not be spelled out in the Scripture, I know that the principles and the direction is within Scripture. It is a matter of being a student of the Word myself. I need to know God's Word. I need to study God's Word. I need to look to God's Word on a regular basis. I don't know that I've ever thought about that as a process. I don't know that I've ever thought about that as something that I do, but I know that I do it.

It is evident that independent Bible study, living by biblical principles, and being self-aware in one's Christian worldview are prevalent as a Christian school leader in incorporating a biblical foundation of Scriptures in decision-making.

In addition, five of the participants responded that Scriptures are used in decision-making as the basis for all decisions and to ensure the school curriculum and educational program is built on the foundation of the Holy Scriptures. As previously mentioned, Lois shared how it is important for her to base major decisions on biblical principles. Also, Amber indicated, "You have to really study the materials" as well as know the Scriptures in order to know how materials connect to the Scriptures, especially with what is being taught. Amber also shared using a Christian curriculum where biblical standards are embedded also ensures that the curriculum connects to the Scriptures. She added, "We have some guidebooks that basically pulls Scriptures out that would pertain to a certain subject area."

Daisy conveyed that the decision-making "trickles down all the way from the board level" who work hard to ensure any decisions they are making are biblical, even when it may be a legal situation. This causes her and the head of school to make Scripture-led decisions with the teachers in the same manner as the board. When responding to situations on a daily basis, they have to be sure that they are not "responding in our flesh" but instead know how the Scripture leads them to respond. Comparably, Lori indicated that all of their policies are based on Scripture and have Scripture references assigned to them. Lori noted, "Our handbook, we also talk about, I don't think every single thing in there has a Scripture reference, but we do reference our policies and our procedures according to Scripture." Similarly, Daniel emphasized,

> The primary way is that we want to have a scriptural basis for everything that we do, and our policy is we put our parents and our teachers to the Matthew 18 principle, so that when there's conflict, you approach the issue one on one and then as there are different levels of needed intervention, you bring in different levels according to the basic outline of Matthew, Chapter 18, which most Christians are familiar with. When I'm dealing with a student who has plagiarized a paper, obviously, I'm hitting him pretty hard with Scriptures that deal with integrity and deal with honesty and deal with stealing. I can't say that everything we do is based on Scripture, but obviously, there are going to be some things that are not, but we are going to try to address matters the way the Scripture would have us address it.

The importance of Scripture-led decisions within the school is clearly articulated in the participants' responses.

Increase staff understanding of decision-making. The final subtheme revealed during analysis, subordinate to the second major theme of theological beliefs was increase staff

understanding of decision-making. Seven of the 11 participants expressed the importance of open and direct communication with staff in helping them to understand the biblical foundations of the school leader's decisions. Daisy shared,

> I think something we've definitely learned is just making sure that they first of all know the things that are going on because I've definitely learned that at some Christian schools the teachers are kind of kept in the dark sometimes. Once we give information to the teachers from the biblical aspect sometimes, just walking it through as a group; like, hey, this is where God is leading us as a school…we try to really have a faculty culture where there can be healthy discussion and because we have teachers that go to different denominations of churches, that would sometimes deal with things differently. But at the end of the day saying we need to always be praying for our students, for our families…and make sure we're approaching it with that mindset of unity together, even if we don't always all agree on the particulars, but knowing that this is to the benefit of our students.

Daisy also shared how this became a problem at another school where teachers had to go to the board themselves because of not being provided any information. She said, "This is actually really hard for me to pray about because this shouldn't even be an issue." Daisy believes, communicating with teachers "should be first and foremost." She also noted at times she forgets to tell other people, but as the leader who attends the meetings and knows everything, she does have to remind herself to tell staff, as it is imperative that they are informed. Likewise, Katherine conveyed the need to be more intentional about communicating to staff as she reflected on a situation where they invited someone to take the Bible position at the school and they thought the person would be fantastic in so many ways, but it was going to be a difficult

decision, financially. Katherine said that they were willing to make the sacrifice. At the same time, the person was also praying and ended up not taking the position because he said the Lord was telling him to stay where he was. "Because the teachers weren't given any information about what was going on, they did not see that this was a clear leading of the Lord", as Katherine explained. In reflection of this incident, Katherine conveyed,

> I think this question makes me realize how much we need to make sure that we're communicating that. We need to make sure that we are intentional about telling staff, here's what the Lord did, and here's how the Lord led, and here's the passage of Scripture that was speaking to us at the time, and that kind of thing.

Allen agrees, as the school leader who makes the decisions, particularly when there is no consensus, that an explanation of why the decision was made should be communicated to the staff. Sometimes when decisions are made "with a little more automaticity" Allen said, he may not give an explanation. He explained,

> Sometimes I need to be expedient and I need to make a decision right then. I just make that decision and hope that it's the right one. I've been doing this a long time. This is my twenty-second year of education, public, private, Christian. This is my sixteenth year of administration. So, at this point I would hope that I built some muscles in some sort of way, when I see something it's just gonna be…I would make that decision with a little more automaticity. So sometimes I explain it to them; sometimes I don't. It depends on how much planning preparedness I have for the decision. If it's a big decision that's going to be earth shattering for a lot of folks, I make sure that we walk them through that and if we're changing the math program or not, I'm not necessarily thinking that I can go back to a verse in John or Mark or the Old Testament and say this is why we're doing

this. What I can do is show respect to them and those that are actually doing the ground

work, and hopefully develop their professionalism and not that they can give me sound

advice in what they're seeing on the ground.

Comparably, most of the time Gwen would communicate information to new teachers

and staff who are not from an Anabaptist background. In this case, Gwen conveyed, "We go

over the Anabaptist principles." She continued,

There are actually fifteen of them but there's three that are core, and we spend some time

going over those with our new faculty and making sure they understand what it means to

be an Anabaptist Christian. They don't always agree with every decision we make, but

we never throw anybody under the bus as far as, I don't necessarily agree with that

decision, but you know it is what it is. I wouldn't say we have a whole lot of problem

with people completely bucking what we…the decisions we make.

During monthly meetings, Lori shared, that she communicates regularly with staff to

understand the biblical foundations involved in decision-making during monthly staff and faculty

meetings which Lori said, "So that's two different times that we meet during the month." Lori

continued,

And we also have department meetings where we talk about the things that are happening

and we pray together , we pray for our students, we talk about the board decisions

regarding policies and procedures, but they are definitely directly spoken as far as how

that relates to Scripture.

Similarly, Daniel indicated,

If there's a decision that's being made based on a scriptural principle, or a biblical idea,

we're going to show them what we're basing that off of. We're going to say, we're really

believe that in this situation, God's Word speaks to this issue. As a school, this is the direction that we're headed.

Also, Claire expressed that there are two factors involved. She said,

> Part of it is that I have been part of the school family for a long time. I think that there is a degree to which my staff trusts the fact that my heart is always for Jesus and for Him glorified. I think part of it is a trust of what I am intending to do when I make decisions that are difficult. That's an important part of it because a lot of times, the decision that has to be made, I can't go into the details of the explanation or it's not for everyone to know. There are things that I have to hope staff just trusts me with and I'm fortunate that they do, but then there are those things that we do have to be able to talk about.

In addition, Claire indicated she wants to be able to help her teachers to all be on the same page when it comes to why she needs to make a certain decision and the basis of that decision. Claire also noted,

> There are some times where I have to begin the process of rolling something out in stages so that they can see the vision in pieces, because it's easier for them to accept big changes if they are able to see the vision piece by piece. Sometimes it's a matter of rolling those things out incrementally and allowing them to see the benefits and to see how Scripture directs us and how it is applicable to what scripture tells us about how we are to be stewarding our students in the school and our resources and to help gain that perspective bit by bit. A big part of this is that I have established a relationship with my faculty. That is a trust relationship and then sometimes I have to help move them from a place of questioning to a place of buy-in to fulfill the mission or the vision.

Darcy also spoke about having established trust with her teachers mainly because many of them are of the same faith where they fellowship, but may not necessarily be on the same page when it comes to decisions that she makes. As a result, she conveyed, "I try to be biblically sound in my decision-making and give them things to read, things to look up, encouraging their personal growth and vision." Establishing policies based on biblical principles and referencing the Scriptures for staff is also similar to what Lois conveyed as a way to help staff understand the biblical foundations of her decision-making. Lois also values the "strong sense of purpose and strong unity" among her staff which she said, is due to everyone's commitment to the vision and sincere belief that the Lord has led them to that school. Lois shared,

> We have principles laid out in our faculty handbook and we have laid out conflict
>
> policies that are based on biblical principles where we have verses to support and to
>
> explain that process. The principle is very established and I just point them back to that. I
>
> go straight to the Scripture. At this point, we are very unified, as a staff and everybody is
>
> very, in touch with the vision.

She also noted because staff is unified, there is minimal disagreements with decisions that are made. Thus, Lois is trying to be very careful to protect this unity.

Theme Three: Spiritual Leadership

The third major theme developed understanding of research question three that sought to discover how Christian school leaders perceive spiritual leadership impacts the creation of an environment where spiritual nurture can occur in ACSI affiliated schools. Participant responses describe the Christian school leader as the spiritual head of the school in developing and leading the community of faith. Christian school leaders shared ways in which they fulfill the responsibility of being spiritual head of the school. Descriptions of spiritual leadership revealed

31 codes which developed into three subthemes. The three subthemes were analyzed from the data associated with theme three, spiritual leadership, which are: spiritual development, spirituality of Christian faith, and spirituality with prayer/meditation.

Spiritual development. The first subtheme discovered during data analysis, under the major theme of spiritual leadership, was spiritual development. The role of the principal or leader of a Christian school in ensuring the spiritual development of staff and students is a crucial factor of leadership practice perceived to impact the creation of an environment where spiritual nurture can occur. Six of the 11 participants believed providing opportunities for and weekly interaction through devotions, chapel services, professional development, workshops, prayer, worship, and Bible study helps to ensure the spiritual development of staff and/or students. Amber expressed through weekly devotions for staff "we share, pray and do a study". In addition, she incorporates a spiritual emphasis at the beginning of each weekly teachers' meeting using scriptural reading and study. For students, Amber shared incorporating prayer time for the students during devotions in the classroom and weekly chapel helps to ensure the spiritual development of students. Also, integrating fall retreats, prayer buddies and large and small prayer groups in the middle and high school once a week helps to ensure students' spiritual development. Amber explained, "This is a time students will get together, sometimes across ages, to open up to each other and pray with each other." Katherine agrees devotions for students also helps to ensure spiritual development. She also encourages student and staff spiritual development by incorporating sanctuary weekends. Katherine shared,

> In addition to the devotions, and the books that we provide and that kind of thing, we try to encourage what we're calling sanctuary weekends, during some of our breaks where students don't have homework and teachers don't have to do any grading or anything.

So, for instance, at Easter this past year, leading up to Easter, we really wanted everyone

to be able to go to their church services and to be able to just read through the New

Testament, the four accounts of the resurrection of Jesus; and to take the time to do that.

And so we feel that one way we can help to facilitate that is by sort of relieving everyone

in our school community, faculty, staff, and students, of any duties or responsibilities or

tasks they would have to do over those breaks. We've kind of put these sanctuary times

in place where work is just off limits; in terms of what we're asking people to do.

Katherine also shared incorporating the daily corporate devotional times every day and weekly

professional development for staff automatically built-in to the schedule also helps to ensure

spiritual development as they focus on scriptural teaching during that time. At times, during

professional development, Katherine shared, "We have things we call student support days."

She continued,

That's once each quarter too, where our students have off. We get together as a faculty in

grade level teams, and we pray for every single student by name and we fill in a chart on

how they're doing in different ways.

Additionally, to ensure the spiritual development of staff, Katherine explained,

We do have our teachers, when they sign their contract each year, they reaffirm that they

believe in our guidelines for leadership and they believe in our statement of faith that

they are regularly attending church every week. So that an annual check-in on those

things, as well.

Similarly, Allen integrated spiritual goals for teachers to develop for themselves. Allen

explained,

It's not necessarily like they want to pray more, those kind of things. That's between them and God. More about their spiritual goals, or how are they going to develop their spiritual life, so that it impacts the school more. Essentially, how are we going to fan the flame of the Holy Spirit within the school? How are we going to become more biblically integrated? They have those each year. That's one way.

Allen also shared he leads the teachers in working on the professional development plan including what kind of things or special projects teachers would like to work on and do, where they would like to focus, and how they plan to meet their goal. "For example", Allen explained, "the math teachers wanted to develop how to be more biblically integrated in their math classes with authenticity." Allen got an academic coach that would help them accomplish this goal. Allen expressed another part of ensuring spiritual development for teachers is also meeting the ACSI Continuing Education Units (CEU) in Bible for accreditation and teacher certification requirements in such programs as Philosophy of Christian Education to learn biblical integration and biblical knowledge. To ensure the spiritual development for students, Allen noted,

First of all, we start with our measurements. We have a worldview measurement that we do twice a year from grades six to twelve. We surveyed them in the beginning of the year, and we hope that we've moved them along in their spiritual lives in the Christian worldview, and so it's really difficult. We don't want to measure whether they know or memorized the book of John, which is great. We're not against that, of course. That's a legalistic measurement of whether they're a good Christian or not. We're really looking at them. Have they moved closer to their faith, closer to Jesus? We ask general questions about whether they understand the Gospel. To the extent they understand the Gospel. What it is. Have they been able to share it lately? Do they feel it? Is their

prayer life…how much time, is it adequate or enough? Those kinds of things. Not necessarily numbers. We make sure we look at that measurement. There are short term and long term goals based on that measurement. We want to take the percentage of understanding for each of those levels. For example, a group of students that aren't clear on the Gospel. We evaluate that. I meet and the principal meets with the teachers or the team and anybody who teaches those particular students. We look at their academic development, their spiritual development, and their physical development. Is there anything that they're excelling or not meeting the circumstances? Then we come up with an action plan for them and reevaluate that the next month. We do that with all two hundred and something students.

Furthermore, Allen explained there is a portfolio developed for each student, and they meet once a month for students who are not clear on a particular area based on the measurement. He also shared new students are placed on probation during the first week before school starts. During this time, Allen meets with teachers and reviews the individual and/or group of new students for two days. He looks to see if they are progressing and how to make further progress and anything that needs to be addressed behaviorally, academically and physically to make sure he and the staff are all on the same page for the new students.

Gwen shared the importance of focusing on intentional spiritual development or spiritual formation for students and staff in scheduling time and opportunities for prayer and fellowship. For teachers, Gwen offers and supports devotions and mentoring, particularly for new teachers. Gwen explained, how new teachers are paired with a mentor. Teachers are also required not to only attend church, but to also be involved in church. For students, Gwen conveyed, "We have built-in Bible classes and chapels." She also communicated the importance of biblical literacy

beginning at the early level with understanding stories and moving toward the Lectio Divina concept. Gwen explained,

> You take Scripture and meditate upon it, and you see how you can apply it to your life. You really only pick one set of Scripture or one piece, one verse maybe two, depending upon how they go together. And you really take time to meditate upon that. So, we're becoming more intentional with our Bible memorization in order to not only develop that biblical literacy, but also to ensure their spiritual formation. Ensuring that students, elementary to middle school are aware of what's out there; and not blindsided when they leave our walls. They may go to a secular college. They may go to the military. They may go into the workforce and it may not be a Christian environment. We want to make sure that they can defend their faith and that they understand why they believe what they believe and are able to defend that in an educated way.

Likewise, Gwen expressed she provides an atmosphere that will allow students and staff to grow spiritually by consistently 'looking for relevant teaching and worship" as an important part of what they do. Gwen communicated,

> We are looking for opportunities for our people to put their teaching and their learning into practice. We are on a regular basis, reminding our students and our faculty about the truth of who God is and the fact that all that we do is to be a reflection of His goodness. We point them to their churches. We provide Bible studies. We provide opportunities, but there is no assurance in that…our students or faculty are going to grow. We've seen where some have not. They're just stubborn and their hearts have been hardened for the time.

Thus, Gwen resolved, "I can't ensure that. That really is a responsibility of the Holy Spirit."

Comparably, Daniel talked about the importance of daily interactions with staff and students to ensure spiritual development not as a formal monitoring process, but as an expectation for teachers. Daniel shared,

> That's a very interesting question. Most schools have some sort of requirement about regular attendance at a Bible-believing church. I'm not a huge fan of that. To me, that feels like…that feels a little bit, to me, like legalism. I'm much more of the mindset that if a teacher understands that, contractually, they are obligated to attend a Bible-believing church, that's what we expect for you to be a teacher here at this Christian school. Then we should trust that's what they're going to. Besides the things that we're doing as a staff and faculty together where we're in-servicing and training together, I would say that, it's the interactions that I have with them. If they're attending church regularly, that's something that will come up in conversation from time to time. If they're walking with the Lord and demonstrating the fruit of the Spirit, then that's something that will come up. It they're not, there's going to be a conflict that's going to come up. It's going to be a little more evident, possibly, than it otherwise would that this person is acting according to the flesh and not according to the Spirit.

In self-reflection, Daniel noted there are times "on any given day," when he may be susceptible to acting according to the flesh, as well. Lori also eluded to daily interactions with staff and students through courses, classes and meetings which helps to ensure spiritual development. Lois expressed they usually deal directly with biblical principles as a priority of integrating them into every course, policy, activity, meetings, and leadership practice to help ensure spiritual development.

Four of the 11 participants responded scheduling and providing mission trips, retreats, and boot camp for students helped to ensure spiritual development particularly for students, but also helped support staff in their spiritual development. Darcy conveyed the importance of spending time with the students through mission trips with the upper grades every year and facilitating elementary and high school chapel to connect with the students. She expressed,

> I spend time with kids and look out for the kids that are wounded. A lot of our kids whose parents have gone through divorce here. We've had a lot of death unfortunately. We have a lot of grandparents raising kids. So, I try to pinpoint kids that I know are hurting and make a special effort to relate to them.

Planning and participating in a two night, three-day student retreat early in the school year, "is incredibly valuable" for Lois and her staff. Lois shared it is a time to get to know the students on a more personal level, which is important in helping to ensure spiritual development of students. Lois shared about the student retreat,

> That sets the tone for the teachers, counselors, and students; and provides a time for them to establish that relationship and to show the students what our spiritual theme is for the year which helps to set the foundation of our school.

Another key component in ensuring spiritual development of students, Lois shared, is their structure. She noted, "We have about fourteen students per class, and that allows the teachers to really get to know the students on a personal level, as well." For teachers, Lois conveyed how she set the tone of the faculty meetings to ensure everyone understands the spiritual focus and goal of the school. She also established prayer partners for teachers. Lois shared,

Because we're small; I have nine teachers. I know them all personally. So I'm checking

on them daily. We had some that had some pretty hard life circumstances last year. So,

we're all just supporting and praying for each other.

Likewise, Daisy shared the value of establishing a spiritual theme and incorporating that theme

into professional development scheduled the week before school to let the teachers know "here's

our theme for the year, here's the Bible verse we're going to focus on to really let that marinate

for them and continuing that for the whole year."

Spirituality of Christian faith. The next succeeding subtheme revealed during analysis

within the major theme of spiritual leadership, was spirituality of Christian faith as the spiritual

leader of the Christian school community. Five of 11 participants communicated and agreed all

of their perceived leadership practices demonstrate total dependence on biblical foundations of

the Holy Scriptures to ensure spirituality of Christian faith tradition. Darcy noted,

All of them. There's not a lot of Christian universities anymore that are teaching teachers

how to integrate faith into their subjects. So, you have to give your teachers tools and

opportunities to learn how to do that. Because it's not a natural, just because I'm a

believer, I know how God works through math. And that's one of those principles that I

can teach. I'm always looking for ways that help the teachers in that way, that we're

integrating faith into whatever we're teaching. And how we run the school financially. It

is an all over program, but it doesn't come naturally. It's something you have to really

study and practice. It's a hard job in that you really have to study and learn and totally

depend on God for His school.

In agreement, Lois shared, "All of our practices demonstrate total dependence on biblical

foundations of the Holy Scriptures as we're trying to teach our students what the absolute truth is

and so we are intentional in that our practices are based on the Word." Gwen affirmed and shared,

> I'm sure there's probably a lot of stuff that we do that we don't even realize we're doing, because it's just so built into the school itself. Another practice is leading as an administrative team by example. I talk a lot about book clubs where we do a lot of book study. We do the devotions in the morning, which, like I said, we have to do for ACSI. We often run book clubs with our faculty, but as an administrative team, we also do a book study. It is often a study by someone who is a Christian who is also a leader in some ways. So, we're given that spiritual guidance perspective and how we can guide from a more spiritual perspective. We also attend Global Leadership Summits often just to get a refresher on how to keep that spiritual perspective when making decisions and to ensure that we're not getting caught up in the world when we make decisions. Then it's a tough balance when you're in education, anyway, because you're striking that balance between what you have to do for the education of your students and what you need to do spiritually for your students. You have to make sure that you're not just making decisions…like curriculum. There's lots of great curriculum out there, but not always is it written by Christian publishers because sometimes that stuff's just junk.

Thus, Gwen conveyed the importance of selecting things the teachers are biblically integrating because "you gotta get that spiritual aspect in every subject." Likewise, Daisy affirmed and shared "The biggest thing is we really try to make sure there's biblical integration in each class."

Relatively, in demonstrating total dependence on Holy Scriptures, Lori expressed "Our policies and procedures have Scripture cited on them and specifically so that the families and

staff understand that the Board just didn't make that up, you know. They got it from the Word of God."

To ensure spirituality of the Christian faith in the school, four of the 11 participants discussed the importance of expressing the Christian faith in their leadership practice. Gwen shared providing opportunities to offer grace whenever she can and not being "militaristic" in the way she handles things helps to ensure spirituality of the Christian faith. She said, "So, grace whether with a teacher or student, I think that helps create a nice environment to work in, when I can extend grace to them." In an example, Gwen explained,

> I think most schools have policies in place, for instance, let's take an example of a
> student that has a behavioral issue and they've done something on the bus and it goes
> against our policy of practice or a rule, if you will, that we've set in place. I think
> sometimes you have a rule and the consequence for breaking the rule and that's all there
> is to it and we're kind of done. I do like to listen to the students and I do like to hear their
> side. I like to hear all sides of the story. Then I can extend grace to them and provide a
> consequence but maybe not the consequence in its strictest form. Providing those
> opportunities to educate them through disciplinary process, rather than just laying down a
> decision. I like the flexibility that I can offer grace. I can hear the story. I can involve
> everyone in it and offer that grace.

In expressing Christian faith in school community, Lois communicated the key part to Christian leadership is looking at the academic and spiritual development and growth of the students. She expressed, "We're concerned about their character and their relationship with the Lord and not just the cold hard facts of the situation." Lois also shared she's very "intentional in mentoring the students." She elaborated,

Just this morning, I had a situation and developed the action plan for a student which

focused more on the student's character. Without getting too specific. The approach is

entirely based on Scripture and what she associates to see as a believer. We're partnering

with her church and some mentors at her church as well in that action plan.

Because of the diverse student population, Daisy noted they focused on providing opportunities

to teach students the process of learning how to communicate with each other face-to-face; not

through social media or cell phones. Furthermore, Daisy expressed,

And when they actually sit down and learn about each other, sharing, "Hey this is what

it's like for me who lives on a farm and this is what's like for you who lives in the city.

Their eyes are kind of open to each other and then they can realize, this is who I'm sitting

next to in class each day.

In expressing the Christian faith, another practice Daisy incorporated is Leadership Legacy

where 11th and 12th grade students are big brothers and big sisters to the elementary students.

Daisy explained, "This practice in our school says, "God has given us this opportunity with

students in preschool through twelfth grade and so, let's be the hands and feet of Christ right here

in the building with these younger students." Teachers act as mentors for the students during

class discussions as they share their experiences with helping younger students.

Darcy expresses the Christian faith by "essentially" encouraging teachers' and students'

personal growth in Christian faith built on biblical principles. She expressed,

The perks of prayer. We start off classes with prayer and take prayer requests. We do a

day of prayer. Sometimes if there's a special need at lunch time, we'll form a circle and

pray for that particular need. I also think it's really important that the kids know the

principles of our faith and they start to study the Bible on their own, having a Bible and

using it; knowing how to use it. Forgiveness is also an important Christian principle. I

think that's an important part of what we try to teach our kids. As part of the Christian

faith, what does it mean? What should my life look like? And we also do a lot of

service-type things; nursing homes, mentally handicapped where we do programs for,

we've done missions projects, and outreach. We bought AEDs heart defibrillators, for

the school through kid's projects like kids on Friday are allowed to wear jeans for a

dollar. Those are some of important principles of Christian faith and we try teaching kids

on a daily basis.

Darcy also noted the importance of expanding learning in the biblical history of God's people for

staff and students and decided to incorporate study about Judaism. Darcy shared,

While reading a book one day, I wondered how much do we teach about Judaism

here…in the classrooms. So I asked my high school teacher and my principal, how are

the Jewish people addressed in any of your classes here? We do a history. So, this year,

I am making that an emphasis; one of my side-line emphasis that we're going to learn

more about the Jewish people and the Jewish nation; how did it get started and how can

we most effectively learn about them. I'm going to have seminary professors who

specialize in Judaism be guest speakers and we'll have the Jewish Passover. So, that is

one thing that we do because it is our faith tradition. We are instructed or commanded to

pray for His people, but if we don't know who His people are, it's kind of hard to do.

Darcy conveyed, "This has been in my mind and heart to do."

In efforts to ensure spirituality of the Christian faith tradition, four of the 11 participants

particularly discussed Christian school leadership practices perceived to help new staff and

students who may have their own expressions of spirituality to understand the existing practice

of spirituality in the Christian school. Lois shared they start the school year with a student retreat where the emphasis of the retreat focuses heavily on their spiritual vision for the year. She explained,

> I think it's a time that really unifies the students and especially the new students and the new faculty because they, faculty and staff make up most of ones who are there…It's an overnight retreat and it's most of the time…we have some parents that volunteer with the teachers and who are also out there. There's a huge difference and differences in expressions of spirituality, but that terminology tears me a bit. But I think the retreat really unifies. We worship together. We pray together. They share their goals. They affirm each other and that's when we announce the life houses. That's when they become unified in that format.

Similarly Daisy shared,

> What we do each year, we also do a similar retreat situation, but we also have a theme for the year, and a Bible verse that goes with it. Also, something where we had to make it very tangible for them. Whether it's a new student coming in or an existing student that is kind of not quite sure where they're at in their faith journey. We try to let them know, we understand everyone is in a different spot but here is where we're headed for the year. We feel that's where God has led us and so we certainly want new students to be a part of that learning. There are students who are older who feel like their parents are making them come to Christian school. We are pretty honest with them saying, we have chapel and you're probably going to struggle with that a little bit, but we want you to know that if you are struggling with something that you hear, there are opportunities for you to have

that individual time with the teacher, if you're questioning things. So, we kind of set that

out from the beginning of the year.

Likewise, Gwen shared they do a lot of similar things Daisy and Lois also discussed, retreats and

other similar events, particularly with their middle school students because as Gwen stated,

"that's a difficult time in development and growth". In addition, Gwen expressed,

> We really work with them, but I know our secondary principal, in particular, if there is a
>
> student that is new and they're really struggling to understand what our school is all
>
> about and feel like they're not fitting in, she will hold weekly meetings with them and
>
> help them through that process. It's very beneficial and very helpful. I think
>
> communication is key.

Comparatively, Darcy shared they don't have anything formal because the students all know

each other and a lot of their students attend that school because they know somebody there.

Darcy also noted,

> I do have complications at the beginning of the year, so I like the retreat idea. In all
>
> honesty, we don't have anything formal. When you have ninety kids and there's
>
> probably twelve to twenty of them attending preschool, we have a pretty small group and
>
> the teachers individually minister to the kids. They might know that there's something
>
> happening outside in the community and spend time mentoring. It's fun to hear what
>
> others are doing, it is giving me ideas.

Bartsch (2006) explained helping new staff and students who may have their own

expressions of spirituality to understand the existing practice of spirituality in the Christian

school can be challenging for the Christian school leader because of the diverse understandings

and practice of spirituality within the school community. In discussing the challenges that may be posed for the Christian school leader, Gwen shared,

I think it probably has to with the difference in our schools. We have a very specific statement of faith, what we consider, a public discipleship school. Whereas, there would be more evangelistic school as far as the other speakers have expressed as their style of school. So, I think it has to do with the style of school that we have. So, when they're coming, our students and families come from very similar churches and backgrounds. There's a lot of unity in their faith practice already. Just typical of the families that we're working with because the focus and the style of school that we have.

In addition, Daisy shared,

I really appreciate that the other speaker noted the difference in schools, because we used to be a discipleship school. We were originally founded out of a church. But in the last five years, I assumed the founding church just felt it was better for both of us to just be separate and we now just rent this facility from the church. That's definitely been a transition for us. We have definitely become more evangelistic. We have some parents that are fairly new Christians and really having their child come here because they want to give them an opportunity that they never had. But for us to recognize that the parents are really growing right alongside of the student. It does create very much different atmosphere than evangelistic schools where that is a huge benefit to know that a lot of students are hearing the same thing, if they go to similar churches, things like that.

Based on the participants' responses, helping new staff and students who may have their own expressions of spirituality to understand the existing practice of spirituality in the Christian

school is less of a challenge for the Christian school leader if the students and families are of a similar faith tradition.

To ensure spirituality of the Christian faith tradition, three of the 11 participants also conveyed the importance of first, being an example as the school leader and modeling humility and servant leadership. Lois shared,

I would also add, just humility myself. While I am the administrator, I'm serving the Lord like they are. One of the things that people have told me numerous times is just how approachable I am. I think that is a key part of building community and the culture that we have at the school.

Likewise, Harold conveyed,

First off, I would go back to my leadership style being a servant leader. That is how Jesus Christ modeled, you know. If you want to be great, you will be one's servant. So, it's a modeling of that lifestyle. That's the practice that hits me immediately, is the way I lead. It should model the life of Jesus Christ. And that servant leadership style that's talked about in the New Testament.

Similarly, Gwen expressed that there's a lot of "stuff" leadership does which they may not realize because spirituality of the Christian faith is embedded "into the school itself." In addition, she noted, "we definitely try to lead as an administrative team, by example" in which the administrative team does a lot of book studies, to learn more about how they "can guide from a more spiritual perspective."

Two of the 11 participants specifically discussed the importance of integrating the Bible into each class and/or subject and teaching Christian worldview integration to ensure spirituality of Christian faith tradition. Daisy expressed,

I would say the biggest thing is we really try to make sure there's biblical integration in each class. Not just like, okay, you're praying to start the class, but for example, history class. You're just going to go straight to the lesson and tell students about Christopher Columbus and not say anything about how it would relate to the Bible. Christ is in everything.

Daisy also noted the importance of ensuring that teachers are not just using Scripture or biblical references at random. She conveyed,

Biblical integration gives some accountability to the teachers because we don't want them to just pull out a random verse that relates to something, but instead really mentioning to kids to show it is like a real life experience of how God works. This creates the atmosphere for kids to know they will hear things God has done in the past and could be doing in the future. This should take place in any class, not just Bible class and chapel.

Likewise, to ensure spirituality of the Christian faith, Allen teaches biblical integration and Christian worldview class to seniors and Christian worldview integration in the beginning of the school year to each teacher. Allen explained,

One is, I teach a worldview class. I specifically teach that class on purpose. I have for seven years, now. That's just to seniors. I specifically teach that class, so that's just practice of my own. I teach the biblical integration, Christian worldview integration at the beginning of the year to each teacher. I evaluate whether they pass their induction or not. I actually sign off on every single staff and teacher evaluation to make sure that's correct. That I don't have any questions about it. If I do, we discuss those. If a student is underperforming spiritually, academically and/or physically then there is a meeting

that's required by policy. If it goes to the second level, then I get involved in that to

make sure that the plan is in writing and in place, and the parents have been met with.

Most of the time, it's caught before that because we meet monthly about the students

challenges. Not always do I have something specific to say about it. I am there to listen

and see what the trends are. It is also a goal of mine to always start with prayer in every

single meeting, where I've met with the teacher, parent or student.

Allen also mentioned the other "practical part" of ensuring spirituality of Christian faith is his

expectations. He shared, "Not only do I expect it. I measure it" using evaluation and

measurement tools of which he must approve.

Spirituality with prayer/meditation. Under the major theme of spiritual leadership,

spirituality with prayer/meditation was the final subtheme revealed during analysis. Six of the

11 participants responded that they generate opportunities for prayer and meditation by

incorporating devotions, worship, and prayer in classrooms and/or Bible classes. Lois shared,

We start every day with a fifteen minute devotional time and worship. So, when the

students first come in, they're all together. It's a whole school devotional opening. We

sing worship songs and do about a five or ten minute devotional led by one of the Pastor

dads that come in. There's a committee that picks people to come in and talk. I think

that sets the tone for our days. A lot of our teachers also pray in their classes and anytime

I'm meeting with a student or dealing with any kind of issue, we always start with prayer.

Likewise, Amber shared "In their Bible classes, if the teacher feels there's a need, then they'll

spend some time in prayer and talking over whatever the situation is." Katherine also noted,

I would say the first would be the morning devotions at the time we do Bible reading and

prayer. Sometimes we'll break up into small groups and we'll pray for school things, but

then also for the people within our small group. Other times we'll meet as departments

and pray that way. Sometimes it's just as a whole group. So that can take several

different forms.

Gwen communicated that they are very intentional in providing devotional time for prayer

groups. She explained,

Definitely our devotional time together is very, very intentional and we offer

opportunities. We meet four days a week as a whole group and then the fifth day is

prayer groups. Those prayer groups change every third year. We change them so you get

an opportunity to meet with different people and work together through your problems

and know that you have this group praying for you. It's another way that you can get to

know your co-teacher and kind of support one another and grow that relationship outside

of the school setting. Then it's often just a mish-mash of elementary people with middle

school people with some high school people. That way, schools are crossing and their

people are getting to know one another because you tend to stick in your groups; like

elementary with elementary and so forth. Sometimes we have the women together and

the men. Their needs are different and their requests are very different and sometimes

things get personal. Women may not be comfortable talking in front of men; if they got a

health concern. We try to keep that, the genders separate.

Similarly, Lori also voiced students in all grades have devotions and prayer time during

homeroom time and Bible classes. She also shared, "For special events, we have what we call an

all school worship where younger kids are bused up and we do a worship service with them and

have special speakers and a praise and worship team that is student-led." Claire incorporated

corporate morning devotions for the staff before the students arrive. She continued,

We pray for one another. We read God's Word together and then I typically will provide

or there will be an opportunity a couple times a week for just to use that time for personal

prayer recognizing that there are…we need to come together as a staff to pray, but we

also need to be on our knees as individuals praying. Then we do corporate devotions in

the morning as a school again, where we are reading God's Word and we are praying for

one another and so forth. Then within our classrooms, each of our classrooms, we

provide opportunities for students to do some personal study sometimes or those Bible

classes provide opportunity for personal study and personal prayer, as well.

Providing opportunities and incorporating daily devotions, worship, and prayer in classrooms as

well as Bible classes for staff and students are evidently important Christian school leadership

practices perceived to impact the school community of faith.

Prayer circles, prayer groups and personal prayer and reflection time are also important

opportunities for individuals to spend time in prayer and meditation for five of the 11

participants. Darcy noted, "Prayer is a pretty big thing." She explained,

We do have a day of prayer with the students and staff where we pray together and praise

and sing on a National Day of Prayer. We do that. And if there's special needs, for

example, we had a young man who had a severe scoliosis of spine and was having

surgery. We had a prayer circle and prayed for him at lunch. Those are some of the

touching, most touching things for me to see that probably…I let ten to fifteen kids pray

and I had to close it. Some of the kids came up to me and said, I wanted to pray; why did

you close it? Our teachers are real good about leading the kids with prayer and centering

on prayer. Our kindergarten and preschool teacher has a practice. Every time our power

sirens go off, they stop and pray for whoever's involved in that. I try and pray for all the

teachers. I assign them all a verse. I asked the Lord to lead me and direct me and give

me a verse, something that is needful for this particular teacher and meaningful. So when

I pray for them I use that verse of Scriptures for them. Then I remind them of that when I

do their evaluations: This is the prayer that I prayed for you. Like I said, we try real hard

to keep in touch with our prayer concerns and requests. It's time to go back and glance

and see our prayers are answered throughout the year. That's some of the things we do.

Amber expressed how they also participated in the National Day of Prayer along with

incorporating prayer groups and personal prayer and reflection time for students. She conveyed,

We have spiritual renewal week usually in January and that's a time for some personal

reflection and time for kids to kind of get alone with God here at school; and also get into

small groups and pray together or talk things over. We also do See You at the Pole. That

is a national program that, it's been going on for a number of years, now. It originally

started with…it does take place mainly on public school campuses. Christian students

agree to meet at the school; at the flagpole to pray. They do it before school starts

because you can't do it during school hours. So, they do it before school starts. We

decided we wanted to participate in that, as well. Now, we do it here at our school, and

we can pray anytime, but you know, we challenged the kids to come earlier than when

school starts and show us that you want to pray and make that a priority in your day. So,

they come about 7:30am. We'll have a time of prayer and usually there's some singing,

and just praying for our country, praying for our school, praying for families, for

churches. There's a whole prescribed kind of program to follow.

Gwen incorporated prayer groups with meditation and personal reflection. She communicated,

One thing we do is first a meditation piece and we reflect. We would call it reflection which is the type of idea. We have journals so when we go through a book study, say for instance, we're studying I Corinthians. We, the administrative team leads devotions. We get a week and we lead it for a week. And often, on Thursdays, we will say bring your journals. We're going to have some reflection questions based on whatever piece of Scripture we looked at that week, they had Monday through Wednesday.

Gwen believed an important part of prayer and meditation is personal reflection. She expressed, "it is a good way for people to really sit back and reflect on what they're studying." Similarly, Daniel also incorporated prayer and personal reflection opportunities. He shared,

Part of what we do for the summer training for teachers, which is built into the schedule, is some sort of time for teachers to spend alone with the Lord. Our headmaster will typically give us tutelage or a message of some kind and then sort of send us off to our work stations, our offices or our classrooms where we will be given maybe some points of prayer or maybe just be given a time to go reflect on something or read God's Word. Then we all come back together and share. When the students have off school for Martin Luther King holiday in January, teachers typically have a prayer retreat that day. There have been a number of years where we have gone up to an old Jesuit seminary that used to be a big school for Jesuit priests that's now a retreat center. We spend the day up there, and that's been wonderful. We do that, probably, every other year on a Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday. We have those times where we as a staff come together for training and in-service that is typically built into the schedule. Sometimes for meditation and reflection.

Other opportunities Daniel provides for prayer are when high school teachers go into the high school section of the building and walk from classroom to classroom praying over the desks, lockers, and hallways. In addition, Daniel expressed there are always times built into the schedule for students to spend time alone with the Lord in prayer, meditation, and reflection. He noted they've had spiritual emphasis day which is an afternoon of prayer, meditation, and reflection time. He shared,

> We just spread them out across the camp or across the school, wherever we are located that particular day. I, or the speaker, the guest speaker, will typically give some sort of direction to some students who never have been exposed to this kind of thing before. We will give them some direction about what they should do during the time and give them some ideas. All we mandate is that they're quiet. Obviously we can't make them pray or reflect or meditate, but we can make somebody quiet. We just say, go off by yourself somewhere and be quiet and have your Bible, a journal. There's two or three different times during the school year that that's an opportunity given to students. Then there's two or three times that opportunity is given to the teachers, as well.

Relatively, Claire conveyed Bible classes and spiritual emphasis week provide opportunities for personal study and personal prayer for students and staff. Claire communicated,

> That will focus on…A lot of times will focus on one aspect of spiritual growth and development or maybe one discipline and helping our students grow in that particular discipline. Some of those would be things like prayer, reflection, solitude, things like that. What does it look like to have a life that would allow that particular discipline to flourish and then we also have a week where we celebrate missions. How do we as individuals impact the world for the Gospel? That really is an opportunity for our

students to take a look at what is there to reflect upon. What is their personal

responsibility to making God, His message known to the world? Whether that would be

within their homes or internationally to provide that opportunity of personal reflection.

Those are some of the things that we do intentionally to be able to provide that time of

personal growth and development.

Claire believes opportunities of prayer and meditation also help students' and staff's personal

and spiritual growth and development.

Integrating retreats is another opportunity provided to develop spirituality with prayer

and meditation as identified by three of the 11 participants. Daisy emphasized students buy-in

more when other students lead prayer and meditation, like through their student council. Also,

Daisy shared the integration of other opportunities as a middle school project and a retreat for the

high school students also provide time for student-led prayer and meditation. Daisy explained,

The middle school goes away just for a whole long day. And we have a speaker and we

do a service project. But then our high school actually sleeps overnight at the camp. So,

I have the chaplains while they're there they lead the kids through prayer activities just

for the kids to see at the beginning of the year, that these are the spiritual leaders of your

class. They're there for you. So really for those student leaders, I put a lot of

responsibility and accountability to say…because our chaplains are elected by the

teachers and the representatives are elected by their classmates to say, God has put you in

this position. At the age you're at and there's a lot you can glean from, but there's going

to be times where you're going to have to call your classmates on things and it's not

going to be easy.

The student leaders who are elected chaplains also lead chapel once a semester to show other students they are taking the responsibility seriously. Daisy shared one of the chapel experiences,

> The chapel we did this past spring that was run by the chaplains is I had found a resource that broke up the Lord's Prayer into nine stations. I paired up one of my student council high school with a middle school student. Groups traveled around to each room and I said guys, this is going to be something for you that I really want you to pray about, like pray the Lord's Prayer, because you're going to have your classmates walk into the room and we know full well some of them are not going to be into this. I said, the ones that are, might buy-in and you might be surprised.

These opportunities Daisy identified, provide times of prayer, meditation and reflection for students who are leading and for those who are learning from the student chaplains. Likewise, Lori incorporated a retreat at the beginning of the year for students in grades five through 12 as an opportunity for prayer, meditation, and reflection. She noted,

> We have students fill out a profile each year where we have specific questions that talk about their relationship with Christ. And then we have it every year at the beginning of the year, for grades five through twelve, an overnight retreat like to a camp or something. We talk about those things and what the goals are and where they're at with the Lord and with each other. We do some of those beginning of the year activities to set it. We also have chapel at each building. We have the lower chapel and then the upper level chapel. We invite the speakers in for that.

Comparatively, Daniel incorporated fall and winter retreats as opportunities to provide time for prayer and meditation. Daniel explained,

It is a little different each year. This year, we actually just folded spiritual emphasis day into the winter retreat. The winter retreat was all day Friday and all day Saturday. It was mandatory for the high schooler on Friday and then we allowed the students who wanted to spend the night at the camp and hang out on Saturday, as well. The best ones have been the ones that are student-run. The student government will work on it for months ahead of time. They will contact their…We have over 70 churches represented in our student body makeup. Our students will reach out. There will be anywhere from eight to twelve students that have taken this assignment on, as something that they're going to put together. They will bring in a worship team from a local church. They will bring in a speaker or public speakers from a local church or local Christian organizations, and they will decide what's going to happen. They brought a guy in to speak to the high school boys about leadership. They brought a guy in to speak to middle school boys about maturity and spiritual discipline. They brought some women in, pastor's wives and ministry leaders to speak to the girls about purity. They planned a worship team that came and we had a really meaningful time of worship. It's kind of spiritual high for students. It's sort of a shot in the arm spiritually is the ultimate intent.

Providing opportunities to develop spirituality with prayer, meditation, and reflection are very important aspects of Christian school leadership practices, which the majority of the participants expressed.

Research Question One

The first research question for this study sought to understand how Christian school leaders perceive their leadership practices impact the creation of a school environment where spiritual nurture can occur. Nine subthemes, including leadership role/mission, leadership goals,

leadership competence, attitude of service, teaching of Christian studies, providing time/resources, guidance for staff, fulfilling the mission, and leading by example revealed the first major theme regarding ways in which leadership practices are perceived to impact a school community of faith. Participants expressed the importance of integrating role/mission and goals into their school leadership practices. In addition, administrators described the relationship between their role and mission in guiding their Christian school leadership practices. Participants also explained their role in the importance of keeping the mission at the forefront of their leadership practices, emulating the mission both in thought and in example, and communicating the mission to everyone in the school community of faith. Describing her role as Christian school leader, Daisy expressed,

> I think it's really…those in leadership have to really emulate the mission both in thought and in example. Because I think that's really helpful for the teachers to be able to see that the leadership is able to do that [emulate the mission] and they in turn, are able to embody that for the students and the students are affecting each other by living that out.

Participants described teacher-driven and student-driven leadership role/mission and goals in handling the daily administrative activities of the school such as scheduling, curriculum and instruction, and meeting the academic, physical, and spiritual growth and development of the students. In addition, as Christian school leaders of ACSI affiliated schools, participants expressed the importance of utilizing ACSI resources, leadership training, and professional growth support which ACSI offers for administration, faculty and staff to impact the creation of a school environment where spiritual nurture can occur in ACSI schools. Being mission-minded and fostering an attitude of service as a Christian school leader is also an important aspect of leadership practice participants expressed to impact the school community of faith. It is

imperative that Christian school leaders value the teaching of Christian studies, provide time/resources, provide guidance for staff, fulfill the mission, and lead by example to impact the creation of a school environment where spiritual nurture can occur in ACSI affiliated schools. In the answer to research question one, Christian school leaders communicated their experiences of leadership practices in the identified components. Administrators' descriptions of their role/mission and goals not only support the mission of ACSI, but also corroborate the research which shows leaders of Christian schools associated with ACSI are most concerned with the integration of mission and practice in an intentionally nurturing way that influences and inspires students (ACSI, 2016; Boerema, 2011; Jeynes, 2012; Nelson, 2015). The identified subthemes corroborate Bartsch's (2006) spiritual leadership framework which focuses on the principal or head of school as the spiritual leader and the spiritual leadership practices in developing and leading the community of faith within the school.

Research Question Two

The second research question sought to develop insight into how Christian school leaders perceive their theological beliefs impact the creation of a school environment where spiritual nurture can occur in students. Four subthemes including engaging biblical studies, supporting students/staff biblical studies, scriptural basis for decision-making, and increasing staff understanding of decision-making revealed the second major theme regarding the ways in which theological beliefs are perceived to impact a school community of faith. Administrators' descriptions of their responsibilities as the spiritual leader of the school community of faith are based on the biblical foundation of the Holy Scriptures to impact the creation of a school environment where spiritual nurture can occur in ACSI affiliated schools. Participants' experiences demonstrate they hold to the biblical foundation and focus on Jesus Christ and

measure all actions against the teachings of the Word of God. Lois shared, "We are very intentional in that everything we do is founded in the Word of God." She noted,

> Our ultimate goal is the discipleship of students, so everything that we teach is founded from a biblical worldview, from a biblical perspective and intentional in choosing our curriculum. We don't believe that education is ever neutral. It needs a spiritual context. So, we are very intentional in how we choose our curriculum.

Participants also expressed biblical integration being incorporated throughout and not "like interjecting a Scripture verse that doesn't fit," as Gwen communicated. Incorporating and facilitating daily Bible classes, chapel services, Christian/Bible curriculum, biblical worldview teaching, morning devotions, prayer groups, and Bible integration, Christian school leaders demonstrated strong support of theological beliefs to impact the creation of a school environment where spiritual nurture can occur in ACSI affiliated schools. As the principal or head of school of an ACSI affiliated school, administrators' experiences corroborate the ACSI mission, wherein all affiliated schools hold to the biblical foundation and focus on Jesus Christ and measure all actions against the teachings of the Word of God (ACSI, 2016). In addition, administrators' experiences within theological beliefs supports Bartsch's (2006) contention in that the principal or head of school as spiritual leader of that community is an important part of the "vocation" or responsibility in recognizing total dependence on the Word of God in the school community of faith (p. 30).

Research Question Three

Research question three sought to understand how Christian school leaders perceive their leading and developing the spirituality of others impacts the creation of a school environment where spiritual nurture can occur in students. Three subthemes including spiritual development,

spirituality of Christian faith, and spirituality with prayer and meditation revealed the third major theme regarding the ways in which leading and developing the spirituality of others are perceived to impact the school community of faith. As the spiritual leader in leading and developing the spirituality of others, participants shared how weekly interaction through devotions, chapel services, professional development, workshops, prayer and worship and Bible study helps to ensure the spiritual development of staff and students. Amber expressed for staff, "we share, pray and do a study." For students, she noted, "This is a time students will get together, sometimes across ages, to open up to each other and pray with each other." Gwen shared how she provides an atmosphere that will allow students and staff to grow spiritually by consistently "looking for relevant teaching and worship" as an important part of what they do. Christian school leaders also expressed total dependence on biblical foundations of the Holy Scriptures to ensure spirituality of Christian faith tradition. Darcy shared, "It's something [total dependence on biblical foundations] you have to really study and practice. It's a hard job in that you really have to study and learn and totally depend on God for His school." Participants shared experiences as spiritual leader of the school community of faith which demonstrates support of generating opportunities for individuals to spend time in prayer and meditation. Administrators demonstrated a strong belief in spiritual leadership to impact the creation of a school environment where spiritual nurture can occur. Administrators descriptions corroborates Bartsch's (2006) spiritual leadership framework in that the Christian school leader as spiritual head of the community of faith is key in developing the school as it gives expression to spirituality within the Christian faith.

Summary

This chapter includes descriptions of the lived experiences of 11 Christian school leaders of ACSI affiliated schools in Pennsylvania. Using individual interviews, document analysis and a focus group session, three major themes emerged: (1) perceived leadership practices that impact the creation of a school environment where spiritual nurture can occur; (2) theological beliefs in leading the faith of the Christian school community; and (3) the principal or head of school as spiritual leader in leading and developing the spirituality of others within the Christian school community. Sub-themes for each major theme developed ideas that were guided by the research questions.

With the integration of school mission and Christian school leadership practices, theme one explored perceived leadership practices of each participant to impact the creation of an environment where spiritual nurture can occur in various ACSI affiliated schools. Sub-themes included leadership practices guided by each participants' role/mission and goals as leadership competence, attitude of service, valuing the teaching of Christian studies, providing time/resources, guidance for staff, fulfilling the mission, and leading by example. Each participant explained their role in the importance of keeping the mission in the forefront of their leadership practices, emulating the mission in practice, and communicating the mission. While the participants' leadership goals varied, all participants expressed a commitment and dedication to the spiritual leadership, service, and vocation of God which makes Christian school leadership unique. Their desire to demonstrate leadership effectiveness which supports a Christian educational program that best meets the educational and spiritual needs of children and youth in a school community of faith, was evident. Several of the participants also expressed the importance of providing opportunities for missions work, service projects, and service as an

integral part of the call and vocation of being the Christian school leader as spiritual leader for the benefit of the whole school community. Participants identified valuing the teaching of Christian studies as integrating a biblical foundation in everything that is taught which helps administrators and teachers think deeper about faith integration. Providing time/resources of spiritual nurture for teachers is another aspect of Christian school leadership identified by participants to impact the creation of an environment where spiritual can occur in a school community of faith. Several of the participants identified that being available to talk and meet regularly with teachers individually and as a staff provides necessary guidance and support for staff. Other principals and/or heads of school identified the importance of providing guidance and support through training and discipleship built on restoration and reconciliation to impact the creation of a school environment where spiritual nurture can occur. In leading by example, some Christian school leaders expressed the need to be authentic in that their leadership practices are aligned with the mission in order to meet the goals of Christian education, while others strongly believe a combination of service leadership and being approachable are most important in leading by example. Despite the various Christian school leadership practices identified by the participants, each demonstrates the vocation of the role of the principal or head of school as spiritual leader of the school and provides understanding of the various responsibilities involved.

Christian school leaders identified additional factors necessary to develop insight into the principal or head of school as spiritual leader of the school community of faith whose leadership practices are based on the Holy Scriptures. Sub-themes of engaging biblical studies within the Christian school community, supporting students/staff in their biblical studies, incorporating a biblical foundation of the Holy Scriptures in decision-making, and increasing staff understanding of those biblical foundations in decision-making helped to provide insight into research question

two which focused on leadership practices based on the Holy Scriptures to impact the school community of faith. The majority of the Christian school leaders described their leadership practices of engaging biblical studies by being intentional in embracing and implementing a Bible curriculum and assisting and monitoring teachers in biblical integration with every subject. Participants expressed a desire and goal to help teachers to instruct from a biblical worldview in all classes to impact the creation of a school environment where spiritual nurture can occur. As an important part of encouraging and supporting students in their biblical studies, participants identified the Christian school leadership practice of assigning students to leadership in order to help students live out their biblical principles and to help teach and encourage discipleship. Along with daily devotions and weekly Bible study, other Christian school leaders expressed the importance of monitoring and providing time and funding to help teachers meet the ACSI certification requirements in biblical studies. Moreover, several participants emphasized the importance of immersing themselves in independent, personal Bible study and being grounded in the Word of God daily in order to incorporate a biblical foundation of the Holy Scriptures in their decision-making. Open and direct communication with staff were important ways many of the participants helped staff to understand the biblical foundations of the school leader's decisions in order to maintain unity in the school community of faith.

Further expression of Christian school leadership practices in developing and leading the community of faith to impact the creation of a school environment where spiritual nurture can occur in ACSI schools, served to develop understanding for research question three. The sub-themes ensuring the spiritual development of staff and students, assuring spirituality of the Christian faith tradition, and generating opportunities of spirituality with prayer and meditation were areas that helped in developing an understanding of leadership practices Christian school

leaders perceived to impact the creation of a school environment where spiritual nurture can occur in ACSI schools. Several Christian school leaders strongly believed providing opportunities for and weekly interactions through devotions, chapel services, professional development, workshops, prayer, worship and Bible study help to ensure the spiritual development of staff and/or students. Other principals or heads of school expressed the importance of scheduling and providing mission trips, retreats, and boot camp for students helped to ensure spiritual development, particularly, for students. As the spiritual leader of the Christian school community, several of the participants communicated and agreed all of their leadership practices demonstrate total dependence on biblical foundations of the Holy Scriptures to ensure spirituality of the Christian faith. Other participants emphasized demonstrating total dependence on the Holy Scriptures in leadership practices as an area they really have to study and practice in order to help teach students what absolute truth is. Generating opportunities for prayer and meditation as the spiritual leader by incorporating devotions, worship and prayer in classrooms and Bible classes was also identified by several Christian school leaders as important leadership practices that impact the school community of faith. Incorporating prayer circles, prayer groups and personal prayer and reflection time are also identified Christian school leadership practices perceived by participants to impact the school community of faith as the spiritual leader. Even though participants described various leadership practices of providing opportunities to develop spirituality with prayer, meditation, and reflection, each participant expressed the importance of spiritual leadership to impact the creation of an environment where spiritual nurture can occur in ACSI schools.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand how leadership practices are perceived by Christian school leaders to impact the creation of an environment where spiritual nurture can occur in ACSI affiliated schools in Pennsylvania. In this study, I sought to develop an understanding of Christian school leaders' lived experiences as the spiritual leader or spiritual head of the school community of faith. Through documents, a focus group, and interviews, I explored the collective and individual experiences of the participants and identified themes that described the experiences of 11 Christian school leaders. Chapter Four presented a detailed analysis of major themes and participants' statements that revealed the subthemes which answered the research questions. Chapter Five includes a summary of the findings, a discussion of the findings based on the theoretical framework and literature review, implications of the research study, delimitations and limitations, recommendations for future research and a concluding summary.

Summary of Findings

This study was conducted in ACSI accredited and/or member schools. Participants included 11 current Christian school leaders who served at ACSI affiliated schools in Pennsylvania. Christian school leadership experiences were articulated through individual interviews, documents and a focus group interview.

Research question one guiding the study asked how Christian school leaders perceive their leadership practices impact the creation of a school environment where spiritual nurture can occur in students. The major theme identified by investigation of research question one was leadership practices. Participants described leadership practices based on the following areas of

leadership responsibility: (1) role/mission, (2) goals, (3) leadership competence, (4) attitude of service, (5) teaching of Christian studies, (6) providing time/resources, (7) guidance for staff, (8) fulfilling the mission, and (9) leading by example. Six Christian school leaders shared the relationship between their role/mission in guiding their leadership practices as keeping the mission in the forefront of their leadership practices, emulating the mission both in thought, action, and by example, and communicating the mission to everyone in the school community, staff, parents, and the community. Lois described her leadership role in the importance of always communicating the mission and vision to everyone including faculty, staff, parents, and the students. She noted, "The vision protects us from becoming sidetracked or being distracted by things that are not in line with the mission and vision." In relation to her leadership role, Katherine also expressed how the mission drives everything. Four Christian school leaders expressed one of their main goals is to partner with parents, families and/or the church which is necessary to gain support for the school and to fulfill the mission of the Christian school. Lois shared, "Because our school is university style, the parents are working with the students during the day, two days a week and we (school staff) have the students three days a week." Gwen explained how partnership with all stakeholders is "necessary to work toward peace with one another in fulfilling the mission of the Anabaptist school." Also, four participants expressed leadership practices based on student-driven goals: to prepare students for whatever God is calling them to do, as Claire expressed, and to make sure students are firmly rooted in their faith, to teach the whole Gospel, and to help students see all of life and learning through the lens of God's Word. As Christian school leaders of ACSI affiliated schools each participant expressed the importance of utilizing ACSI resources as leadership forums, training and support opportunities, maintaining accreditation/membership requirements, professional growth support

for staff, collaborative goal setting, and accountability and evaluations systems to enhance their leadership competency and Christian education program to best meet the educational and spiritual needs of the students. Four participants specifically discussed the accountability and credibility which ACSI affiliation brings to the Christian school leadership role and the school itself. Being given the leadership tools through ACSI Leadership U, Darcy shared that she feels a "great obligation to follow through, to the school and to herself." Ten participants shared how fostering an attitude of service as another Christian school leader area of responsibility in providing opportunities for service projects and missions work to demonstrate the Gospel of Jesus Christ in action. Another area of leadership responsibility noted in literature, is valuing the teaching of Christian studies, and seven participants described practices as integrating Christian faith and biblical principles in everything that is taught in the school and requiring and prioritizing Bible classes and chapels. In addition, providing time and resources for staff was another area where participants expressed importance in their leadership practices. Participants shared providing relevant and current books and other materials helps teachers to be more diligent in their professional and spiritual growth. Also, participants shared how providing time for faculty meetings, daily morning devotions, chapel, and Bible studies help promote spiritual nurture. Providing guidance for staff as they work through the implementation of classroom issues such as behavior management based on sound group of law and Gospel is another area where five participants noted importance in their leadership practice by being available to talk and meet regularly with teachers individually or as a staff and developing a process of restoration and reconciliation for students and staff. Five of the participants conveyed the use of Scriptures when providing guidance for staff as they work through the implementation of classroom issues such as behavior management based on sound group of law and Gospel, as an equally important

leadership practice. Four participants specifically discussed the essential leadership practice of fulfilling the mission by being authentic in aligning their leadership practices with the mission to assure parents and families they receive the Christian education the parent chose for their child. Another very significant leadership practice was leading by example; four participants overwhelmingly noted being readily available for others and always willing to listen no matter how busy they may be with the daily responsibilities as the Christian school leader.

Research question two addressed how Christian school leaders perceived their theological beliefs impact the creation of a school environment where spiritual nurture can occur in students. The major theme identified by investigation of research question two was theological beliefs. Participants described leadership practices based on the following areas of responsibility as the Christian school leader: (1) engage biblical studies, (2) support students/staff biblical studies, (3) scriptural basis for decision-making, and (4) increase staff understanding of decision-making. Eight participants shared leadership practices in the area of engaging biblical studies as being intentional in adopting and implementing a Bible curriculum and assisting and monitoring teachers in biblical integration within every subject. Lois noted, "We are very intentional in that everything we do is founded in the Word of God." She continued, "Our ultimate goal is the discipleship of students, so everything that they teach is founded from a biblical worldview, from a biblical perspective and intentional in choosing our curriculum." In the area of encouraging and supporting students in their biblical studies, four participants noted they have assigned students in leadership capacities to help students live out their biblical principles and understand their role in discipleship. In addition, four participants expressed leadership practices in encouraging and supporting teachers in their biblical studies by providing time and funding for and/or closely monitoring teachers to help them meet the ACSI certification requirements in

biblical studies and facilitating weekly Bible study with teachers. Another leadership practice in the area of encouraging and supporting teachers in their biblical studies was incorporating daily devotions where staff pray together and encourage each other. Clearly incorporating a biblical foundation of the Holy Scriptures in decision-making is another area of responsibility which participants described leadership practices perceived to impact the creation of a school environment where spiritual nurture can occur in students. Eight participants emphasized the importance of immersing themselves in independent, personal Bible study and being grounded in the Word of God daily in order to incorporate a biblical foundation in decision-making. Darcy said, "This is a critical part of who I am." With emphasis, Katherine expressed, "Well, first and foremost, I need to be in God's Word every day." Scriptures are used in decision-making as the basis for all decisions and to ensure the school curriculum and educational program is built on the foundations of the Holy Scriptures, as five participants also noted as their leadership practice. Seven participants communicated open and direct communication with staff as the leadership practice in the area of helping staff to understand the biblical foundations of the school leader's decisions.

Research question three addressed Christian school leadership practices in leading and developing the spirituality of others within the school community of faith as spiritual leader or spiritual head of the school. The major theme identified by investigation of research question three was spiritual leadership. Participants described leadership practices based on the following areas of responsibility as the spiritual head of the school: (1) spiritual development of staff and students, (2) ensuring spirituality of the Christian faith, and (3) generating opportunities for individuals to spend time in prayer and meditation. Six participants noted providing opportunities for and weekly interactions through devotions, chapel services, professional

development, workshops, prayer, worship, and Bible study helped to ensure the spiritual development of staff and students. Four Christian school leaders shared incorporating and participating in mission trips, retreats, and boot camp for students and staff helped to ensure spiritual development. Ensuring spirituality of the Christian faith is another area of responsibility as the spiritual head of the school where five participants described leadership practice in demonstrating total dependence on biblical foundations of the Holy Scriptures. Lois expressed, "Our policies and procedures have Scripture cited on them." In addition, four participants shared Christian school leadership practices which help new staff and students who may have their own expressions of spirituality, to understand the existing practice of spirituality in the Christian school where they serve. Participants described beginning of the year retreats that focus heavily on the spiritual vision for the school help new staff and students understand the existing practice of spirituality in the Christian school. Generating opportunities for individuals to spend time in prayer and meditation is another Christian school leadership responsibility where participants identified leadership practices. Six participants indicated that incorporating devotions, worship and prayer in classrooms and/or Bible classes are opportunities generated for prayer and meditation. Five participants also shared incorporating prayer groups, prayer circles and personal prayer/reflection time as Christian school leadership practices that generated opportunities for prayer and meditation.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to understand how Christian school leaders of ACSI schools perceive their leadership practices, theological beliefs, and spiritual leadership impact the creation of a school environment where spiritual nurture can occur. Christian school leadership is the ministry of the gospel of Jesus Christ which calls the believer to a commitment

of serving others that they may be transformed in the image of Christ. The Christian school leader accepts the call and commission to lead others toward a faith in living a Christ-centered life. According to Taylor (1966), from the heart, the Christian school leader nurtures others in the development of their faith as the Christian leader is also engaged in the process of personal and Christian growth in understanding, skills, and knowledge of the faith. Within his spiritual leadership framework, Bartsch (2006) contended the principal or head of school is called to be the spiritual leader with the task of directing the school community toward a deeper spirituality, development, and growth in the Christian faith. Administrators' descriptions of Christian school leadership practices perceived to impact the school community of faith, further support Taylor's (1966) perspective on Christian school leadership, as well as Bartsch's (2006) spiritual leadership framework.

Empirical Literature

There is limited research that explicitly defines and discusses the nature and field of Christian leadership (Kessler & Kretzschmar, 2015). The present study extends the literature of Christian leadership by exploring Christian school leadership practices. Dockery (2011) defined Christian leadership as a calling to provide for a Christian organization and recognized as a unique type of leadership in service to others as Jesus Christ Himself came to serve. In support of Dockery (2011), participants shared a commitment to serve as a school leader who was called by God to be shepherds, spiritual leaders and/or servant leaders in a school community of faith. Christian leadership as defined in this study, refers to leaders with responsibilities within a Christian organization such as ACSI affiliated schools that "have a distinct identity and mission…grounded in the truth of God's revelation to us in Christ" (Dockery, 2011, p. 2). Participants in the present study are current Christian school leaders in ACSI affiliated schools

that are rooted in a Christian philosophy of education, the eternal Word of God as revealed in Scripture and in creation, and the concept of redemptive teaching (ACSI, 2016).

Leadership in Christian schools is Christ-centered, grounded in the biblical worldview, and guided by a mission to nurture followers of Jesus Christ (ACSI, 2016). Dockery (2011) contended the link between leadership and the mission for faith-based organizations is self-evident. One of the most important topics identified by the leaders of Christian schools affiliated with ACSI and Christian Schools International (CSI) in Boerema's (2011) study was the integration of school mission and Christian school leadership practice. In that regard, the present research also confirms Dockery's (2011) literature and Boerema's (2011) study. Participants shared leadership practices guided by their mission as critical for the principal or head of school to make sure the school is meeting the goals set forth for the parents. Daisy expressed, "As a graduate of my school, and my role in leadership I am fulfilling my mission in partnering with families and creating a community of learning for our students." "Being focused on what God's will is for our school," Daisy continued, "when making tedious day-to-day decisions that affect partnership with families." Christian school leadership practice, according to ACSI (2016) is carrying out the mission in thought and action towards the spiritual development of children and youth in an intentional, nurturing manner. Participants also explained their role in the importance of keeping the mission in the forefront of their leadership practices, emulating the mission both in thought and in example, and communicating the mission to everyone in the Christian school community. Lois noted, "Because I think that's really helpful for the teachers to be able to see that the leadership is able to do that [emulate the mission both in thought and in example] then they in turn are able to embody that for the students and then the students are affecting each other by living that out."

As the aim of Christian education is to nurture one's life toward a life in Christ and Christian living at each level of one's experience in Christian education, participants expressed one of the main goals is to ground students firmly in the Christian faith and help families have Christianity become a lifestyle. In his role as servant leader, Harold shared one of his goals is to reach out to those in poverty, to teach the whole Gospel, and share Jesus Christ with everybody who comes in the school. Another goal participants shared was training students for discipleship and helping young people confidently engage the world as disciples of Jesus Christ. As a Christian school leader, Claire expressed, "one of our main goals as a Christian school is to help students gain the knowledge that will be necessary for them to be able to do whatever it is that God is calling them to do." Wyckoff (1955) explained when the living Christ is known and experienced, belief becomes more than intellectual acceptance, and Christian education is knowing Christ, who is the truth of God in human life and that man will become free through wholehearted and complete acceptance and dedication to Jesus Christ as personal Savior. As Amber noted, "my mission is to provide a Christian education, assist students in discovering their God-given potential…giving students opportunities to find out what God has given them as abilities and gifts…I want kids to leave the school firmly rooted in their faith."   With emphasis, Wyckoff (1955) explained through experience, Christian education teaches and leads for the purpose of the reconstruction of personality toward the Christian life and living as a person in Christ with the Christian faith community and experience. Christian school leaders provided experiences of Christian life and living in the school community of faith by teaching Christian worldview integration, integrating Bible in each class, weekly chapels, weekly and daily devotions, Bible study, regular prayer, incorporating Bible curriculum, guiding from a spiritual perspective, incorporating biblical foundations in school policies and procedures, and worship.

Furthermore, participants' responses corroborates previous literature of the Christian education experience as defined by Wyckoff (1955). Wyckoff (1955) contended the Christian education experience must be conserved and further developed to reach Christian self-development through the experience of Christian faith, gaining of Christian belief, and the growth in the practical Christian way of life.

Blackaby and Blackaby (2001) explained Christian school leadership is unique with distinctive elements of spiritual leadership which includes: the task of spiritual leaders to move people to where God wants them to be; the spiritual leaders dependence on the Holy Spirit to nurture the spiritual growth in others; the high sense of accountability the spiritual leader possesses; the spiritual leader's influence on all people; and how spiritual leaders seek and work to fulfill God's will (pp. 20-23). Participants identified Christian school leadership practices which confirms Blackaby and Blackaby's (2011) elements of spiritual leadership. Darcy voiced, "Personal and spiritual growth is vital and building your own life is critical" to be able to help nurture others' spiritual growth. In leading and developing the spirituality of the school community of faith, Lois communicated, "I think modeling that my own faith is growing and my dependence on the Lord is evident to the teachers." Likewise Gwen noted, "The way that we guide and lead teachers when they come to us for help" and "ensuring I am doing daily devotions…attending church regularly myself and praying with staff" is vital for the Christian school leader as spiritual leader. Insomuch as Christian school leaders provide an atmosphere that will allow students and staff to grow spiritually through relevant teaching, worship, regular Bible study, Bible curriculum, Christian worldview integration, devotions, chapels, and other opportunities for staff and students to put their teaching and learning into practice, Claire emphasized, "it [spiritual development] is a responsibility of the Holy Spirit."

Participants' responses also support the research literature of Ledesma (2013). Ledesma (2013) reported L. Roo McKenzie's view of a spiritually led school is an environment where God is given the priority in daily activities, where students are clear about the priority of their spiritual development, and where students see spiritual values being exemplified by the staff. In addition, Ledesma (2013) conveyed a spiritually led school is also where faculty and staff members who are truly converted at heart understand their primary role is teaching to lead students into a loving relationship with Christ through modeling a Christ-centered lifestyle publicly and privately and where spiritual faculty relates to students and to each other with grace, compassion, kindness, and patience. Participants shared the importance of leading by example in their Christian school leadership practices and the importance of hiring teachers who are passionate about living Christian lifestyle and growing Christ-like children and youth in discipleship. Harold expressed, "My leadership style, servant leadership, is how Jesus Christ modeled." He continued, "The way I lead should model the life of Jesus Christ." As far as faculty and staff, Harold communicated, "I'm looking for a particular teacher as I hire them and I wanna hear a teacher that's passionate about sharing the Gospel. That's who I'm looking for." Participants also described Christian school leadership practices where faculty serve as mentors to students, leading staff in showing grace, compassion, kindness and patience in dealing with student behavior through restorative discipline and process of reconciliation, providing teacher support, modeling biblical principles, and using Scripture to support all decisions.

Dantley (2003) contended some school experiences which may be spiritual are: inspiring a student to voluntarily help someone in need; comforting a student or staff in a time of bereavement for a close friend or relative; encouraging students to visit a sick classmate at home or hospital; attending wakes, memorial and funeral services of colleagues, parents and students;

celebrating those who receive promotions to new positions or retirement; food distribution

projects for those in need; voluntary work in food banks or food kitchens; and acknowledging

and respecting differences of others. In support of Dantley (2003), participants described

opportunities for local, national and international mission work, family ministry extension and

partnership, schoolwide service projects, organization of hands-on projects, service learning into

the curriculum, and community involvement projects and activities as school experiences that

model and demonstrate the servant leadership of Jesus Christ. Participants shared prayer is a

prominent and regular practice in the school community of faith. Darcy noted, "Prayer is a

pretty big thing." She continued, "Our teachers are real good about leading the kids with prayer

and centering on prayer." In addition, Darcy shared, "if there's special needs…we have prayer

circles and pray, even at lunch time." Service is another important area of responsibility for the

school community of faith. Allen conveyed, "Sharing the Gospel is integrated in everything we

do. We have four days a year that our students go out and do service. We partner with the same

six community groups in the inner city." Allen continued, "Some of them work with the

homeless and then some of them do different projects. They [students and staff] are also

required to serve each other… It's just really who we are." All participants expressed a

commitment to serve as the spiritual leader of the Christian community of faith to help shape

children spiritually in an intentionally, nurturing way. This research confirms and supports

relevant literature in Christian school leadership, Christian education, and elements of spiritual

leadership. In addition, the school leadership practices identified in this study extend beyond

Christian school leadership theory into practice. This study also sheds new light on Christian

school leadership practices perceived to fulfill the aim of Christian education, which demonstrate

distinctive elements of spiritual leadership, indicators of a spiritually-led school environment, and those which describe spiritual school experiences.

Theoretical Literature

The theoretical framework guiding this study was Bartsch's (2006) major practices of spiritual leadership: leading by example, supporting teachers in their theological studies, incorporating theological considerations in decision-making in the school, ensuring instruction of the Christian faith within the school, demonstrating an attitude of service in both school and the world based on the theology of the cross, valuing the teaching of Christian studies, providing guidance for staff as they work through the implementation of classroom issues such as behavior management based on sound group of law and Gospel, and providing opportunities to develop aspects of spirituality through prayer and meditation. Bartsch (2006) contended the principal or head of the school community is to be the spiritual leader because of the nature of the school community and is an integral part of the calling or vocation of spiritual leadership. Spirituality develops as it is lived, practiced and experienced in spaces created for individuals in that school community (Bartsch, 2006). The present research study confirms Bartsch's (2006) spiritual leadership framework because each of the Christian school leaders communicated various leadership practices perceived to nurture the school community of faith based on Bartsch's (2006) major areas of spiritual leadership responsibilities as indicated above.

In leading by example, four participants expressed being readily available for others and always willing to listen no matter how busy they may be, handling the daily responsibilities as the school leader. Daisy noted the importance of letting teachers and students know that she's there for them because it's easy to put off a teacher or a student when you are working on daily administrative duties. Darcy shared one of her main goals is to be an example and being

available as critical leadership practices in this area of leadership responsibility. Lois voiced being very approachable is important in leading by example. Likewise, Gwen shared the importance in the way the Christian school leader guides and leads others, particularly when approached by staff who is seeking help, is most important in leading by example.

Another area of leadership responsibility as spiritual head of the school community of faith according to Bartsch (2006) is encouraging and supporting teachers in their theological studies. As school leaders of ACSI affiliated schools, four participants conveyed that providing time and funding for and closely monitoring teachers to help them meet the ACSI certification requirements in biblical studies, as perceived leadership practices. Darcy supports teachers by helping them achieve their ACSI certification through Continuing Education Units (CEU) in biblical studies as well as facilitating a weekly Bible study with the teachers focusing on the Books of the Bible. Lois shared, "We offer a lot of the ACSI teaching opportunities with continuing education, but also online seminars that are available to them." Likewise, Gwen encourages and supports teachers in their biblical studies by "diligently" helping teachers achieve ACSI certification at her school. She shared, "So, that's something that they have to do and definitely a way that they're almost forced to continue in some form of biblical study or devotion time." Incorporating book clubs is also another leadership practice Gwen noted to encourage and support teachers in their biblical studies. Similarly, Daniel provides time and funding to help teachers to obtain CEUs toward ACSI certification. Daniel also facilitates biblical studies through mandatory in-service and training in the Principle Approach, which teachers attend during the summer. Participants also shared how weekly staff devotions encourage and support teachers in their biblical studies and allows time for staff to pray and

encourage one another which helps to foster shared beliefs and values within the school community of faith.

Clearly incorporating theological considerations or biblical foundations of Holy Scriptures in decision-making in the school and helping staff to understand the biblical foundations for those decisions, as the spiritual head of school is another important area of leadership responsibility. Eight participants responded it is vital for Christian school leaders to immerse themselves in independent, personal Bible study and to be grounded in the Word of God daily in order to incorporate a biblical foundation of Holy Scriptures in their daily decision-making. Darcy shared "this is a critical part of who I am. But it takes a lot of constant, constant study." Lois expressed, "In trying to live by the biblical principles of God's Word," she continued, "In all of my decisions, I try to base them off of the truth. Just the truth in God's Word. Especially when it comes to these major decisions, looking at the principles that we not only are, but are our statement of faith for the school." Katherine noted the importance of being in God's Word every day, "Just so that's molding the way my mind thinks about things. I believe that the way that our minds are transformed is by just filling our minds with the Scriptures and knowing what it says." Similarly, Allen expressed he hopes the Word of God is so engrained in his worldview that "I would be making decisions that are wise based on biblical thought and action." Gwen emphasized decision-making in integrity as "Jesus made decisions and did things with integrity." Harold expressed how each day starts out in the Word and in prayer and there are times when prayer is needed during meetings with teachers or while working with the Board of education in order to get everyone "back on focus and get a right attitude" when making decisions. Claire shared, "For me personally having a Christian worldview that recognizes that God's Word is my own…Is the only rule for faith in life."

Five participants also conveyed that Scriptures are used in decision-making as the basis

for all decisions and to ensure the school curriculum and educational program is built on the

foundations of the Holy Scriptures to ensure "we are not responding in our flesh" (Daisy) but

instead know how the Scripture leads the school leader. Lois indicated all of their policies are

based on Scripture and have Scripture references assigned to them. These leadership practices

also help staff understand the biblical foundations of those decisions. Most of the participants

conveyed the importance of open and direct communication with staff also helps them to

understand the biblical foundations of the school leader's decisions. Katherine expressed the

importance of being intentional about communicating to staff to avoid misdirection and

miscommunication between administration and staff. Bartsch (2006) emphasized the goal of the

spiritual head of the school is to build up the school family as an educational community. In

support, Claire expressed that there are two factors involved in open and direct communication

with staff: (1) the degree to which staff trusts the school leader decision; and (2) certain decisions

need to be discussed in more detail. Claire indicated she considers both factors as she wants to

be able to help teachers to be on the same page when it comes to why she needs to make a

certain decision and the basis of that decision. In decision-making, Darcy explained trust is

established with teachers mainly because many of them are of the same faith. Lois values the

"strong sense of purpose and strong unity" among staff which she said is due to staff

commitment to the vision and sincere belief that God led them to that school. She attributes staff

understanding of leader's decision-making to staff unity and is very careful to protect this unity.

Through biblical integration, incorporating Bible curriculum, incorporating required

Bible classes, chapels, and devotions, participants shared as ways of ensuring instruction and

valuing the teaching of Christian studies as the spiritual head of the school. "Studying God's

Word is important because God's Word speaks to everything" (Claire). Gwen expressed the importance of incorporating a good Bible curriculum and being "very intentional about keeping our Anabaptist heritage strong in that curriculum." Darcy believes implementing a curriculum map called Curriculum TRAX provides a guideline to help teachers know what faith integration really means. She conveyed, "We have to think deeper about faith integration…how do we integrate our faith and biblical principles in everything we teach?"

Bartsch (2006) conveyed the principal is the head and the school is the family and thus the principal is viewed as the head of the family which is used to explore the nature of the school community of faith and the relationship of the principal to the school community of faith. In addition, Bartsch (2006) stated,

The family is, then, the cradle for schooling, but the family also provides a structure which we can explore to help us to appreciate how the principal can function as spiritual head of the school family and how she/he might develop that role for the benefit of the whole school community.

As spiritual head of the school family, demonstrating and fostering an attitude of service in the school and world participants communicated various leadership practices in the doctrine of vocation "as God in Christ has served us, so we are called to serve others in our various areas of responsibility…for the purpose of benefitting others" (Bartsch, 2006, p. 30). Daisy shared that this is definitely the main area where school leaders and staff have to lead by example. Christian school leaders are servant-minded (Amber) and mission-minded (Darcy) in providing opportunities for service projects, missions work, family ministry extension, and service learning programs. Daisy voiced, "We want the community to know that we're the hands of Christ." Christian school leadership practices in fostering an attitude of service is a "mindset and it's

what Christ calls us to…we're to give them [students] those opportunities where Christ

ministering to those that needed it the most, not the ones that are just easy to minister to"

(Daisy).

Another key learning area as the spiritual head of the school, based on Bartsch's (2006)

major spiritual leadership responsibilities is ensuring time and resources of spiritual nurture are

provided. To help teachers in being more diligent in their professional and spiritual growth,

Darcy requires teachers to be able to "deem the tools" and apply Christian principles to the

classroom. Smaller Christian schools have limited resources (Amber), but utilize free webinars

and seminars to provide time and resources of spiritual nurture for teachers. Several participants

have established scheduled Bible teaching, chapel, discipleship, devotions and prayer as time for

the spiritual nurture of students and staff. Christian school leaders also noted that the leader

must nurture him/herself spiritually first, to be in tune with your needs and with the teachers'

needs (Gwen). Gwen also incorporated journaling for teacher's reflections, as a practice in

providing time and resources of spiritual nurture as a way to stay in tune with teachers.

In building up the school family as an educational community as spiritual leader of the

school, the principal or head of school is responsible for providing guidance for staff as they

work through the implementation of classroom issues such as behavior management based on a

sound group of law and Gospel. Participants shared being available to talk and meet regularly

with teachers individually and/or as a staff during weekly staff meetings to discuss school culture

is a very important leadership practice. This practice helps, particularly, when a teacher

experiences an area of difficulty. Daisy feels listening first is most important so that you, as the

leader, can offer helpful feedback and suggestions. As spiritual leader of the school community

of faith, participants shared it's important to help teachers to "know they're not alone" (Daisy).

Establishing a discipline system built on Christian principles of restoration and the process of

reconciliation is very important, also. In working through the process of reconciliation, Claire

shared, "The beauty of it is when the circumstances are turned around because our teachers at

times need to go through that process with the student, as well."

As spiritual leader of the school, the principal or head of school has the key role in

leading and developing the spirituality of the Christian faith, ensuring spiritual development of

staff and students, and generating opportunities of spirituality through prayer and meditation.

Bartsch (2006) explained this means the spiritual leader being an active, confessing Christian and

living the life of faith through the power of the Holy Spirit, leading and participating in daily

worship activities, leading in prayer and encouraging others to pray, providing opportunities for

prayer and meditation and promoting and leading in the study of God's word, fostering an active

prayer life in the school community of faith, promoting staff Bible studies, promoting spiritual

formation of new staff and students, creating opportunities for staff and student spirituality

through quiet reflection time, and encouraging church membership and active participation in

church. Christian school leaders shared how they've provided opportunities for and participated

in devotions, chapel services, professional development, workshops, prayer, worship, and Bible

studies to ensure the spiritual development of staff and students. Also integrating fall retreats,

prayer buddies and large and small prayer groups in the middle and high school helps to ensure

students' spiritual development. Katherine incorporated "sanctuary weekends" which relieve

faculty, staff and students of any duties, responsibilities or tasks and take personal/individual

time for spiritual renewal. When staff signs their contract, Katherine explained, they must also

reaffirm that they believe in the guidelines for leadership, affirm they are regularly attending

church every week and affirm belief in the statement of faith each year. Allen integrated

spiritual goals for teachers to develop each year and how they're going to develop their spiritual

life so that it impacts the school more. For new teachers, he offers and supports devotions and

mentoring. Gwen communicated she provides Bible studies and opportunities for students and

staff to put their teaching and learning into practice. Darcy noted the importance of not only

facilitating mission trips and chapel for students and staff, but interacting with the students on

mission trips and connecting with the students during chapel helps to ensure spiritual

development. Lois emphasized starting the school year with student retreat which focused on

spiritual vision for the school year provided time that unified students, especially new students.

As spiritual leader of the school community of faith, Christian school leadership practices are

consistent with Bartsch's (2006) major areas of responsibility to which the principal or head of

school is called to serve.

Implications

The present study made several important discoveries with numerous implications for

Christian leadership approaches to nurturing the spiritual growth and development of a school

community of faith. The results of my study in examining the lived experiences of Christian

school leaders of ACSI affiliated schools can provide Christian school leaders an understanding

of leadership practices, theological beliefs and spiritual leadership. Additionally, the results can

provide current and aspiring Christian school leaders a better understanding of the principal or

head of school as the spiritual leader who plays a key role in developing and leading the

spirituality of the school community of faith. Christian educators and Christian education

associations such as ACSI and Christian Schools International (CSI) can also benefit from this

knowledge in practical ways of fulfilling the Christian school mission, achieving the goals of

Christian education and being aware of the distinctive elements of a spiritually-led school

environment. This study demonstrates how Christian school leadership extends beyond theory into practice. Thus, the findings of my study can provide principals and heads of schools with a practical basis on which to consider how to deal with the various leadership responsibilities as a spiritual leader which can impact the spiritual life of children and youth.

Theoretical Implications

The present study also pinpoints numerous theoretical implications for spiritual leadership. Traditional models of leadership do not serve as the basis of Christian school leadership. Christian school leadership is unique in traditions and history as it involves "distinctive qualities which must be understood and practiced to be effective spiritual leaders" (Blackaby & Blackaby, 2001, p. 20). Spiritual leadership is most important in Christian education in the school community of faith. As the spiritual leader of the school, the principal or head of the school has the key role in building the school family as an educational community through spiritual development of the Christian faith (Bartsch, 2006). Participants described various perspectives of Christian school leadership practices within the context of spiritual leadership. Christian school leader responses described various school leadership practices in support of the distinctive qualities of spiritual leaders in incorporating a biblical foundation on which they deal with various responsibilities of the Christian school leader, engaging biblical studies and being intentional in adopting and implementing Bible curriculum, monitoring teachers in biblical integration within every subject, and by leading and developing the spirituality of the school community of faith. Spiritual leadership is a crucial factor of leadership practices perceived to impact the creation of an environment where spiritual nurture can occur in students. Principals or heads of school must provide opportunities for and weekly interactions to ensure the spiritual development of staff and students in the school community of faith. The

leader of the school community of faith "cannot neglect the spiritual" as we must recognize that "all people within the school community have been created as body, mind and spirit" (Bartsch, 2006, p. 31). Participants shared various areas of leadership responsibility as spiritual head of school and the importance of his/her own spiritual growth. Bartsch (2006) emphasized the principal or head of school has the initial responsibility for his own spiritual growth, "to fulfill the responsibility of being spiritual head of the school and develop the school community of faith" (p. 35). It is also important that principals or heads of school "integrate their expression of spirituality into their professional practice and activity" as participants supported, so that there is authenticity in their responses to situations and decisions (Bartsch, 2006, p. 35). Participants expressed the importance of modeling the life of Jesus Christ and total dependence on the Holy Spirit to create an atmosphere that allows staff and students to grow spiritually. As Bartsch (2006) explained, the integration of spirituality into professional practice and activity in the school community creates a strong sense of identity in living the life of faith through the power of the Holy Spirit with heads, hands and hearts.

Empirical Implications

In addition, the present study made several important discoveries with numerous implications for Christian school leaders of ACSI affiliated schools and school leadership competencies. Christian school leaders of ACSI affiliated schools communicated leadership practices based on ACSI mission and school leadership competencies as outlined in the Christian School Leadership Framework (CLSF). Christian school leaders' experiences demonstrated their commitment to promote spiritual leadership in ACSI schools to impact the creation of an environment where spiritual nurture can occur. Participants' experiences also showed commitment to serve the school community of faith and provide teaching and learning that is

biblically sound, academically rigorous, socially engaging, and culturally relevant (ACSI, 2016).

Participants responses show that Christian school leaders of ACSI affiliated schools embody a

biblical worldview, engage in spiritual development and discipleship, embrace personal and

professional growth, and assist parents in fulfilling their biblical responsibility to educate

children within a Christian framework based on essential elements of truth, intellectual

development, Christian educators, potential in Christ, and operational integrity (ACSI, 2016).

As supported by participants, Christian school leaders of ACSI affiliated schools rely on ACSI

benefits to member and accredited schools for establishing personnel resources and

organizational policies and practices that encourage support for professional growth;

commitment to collaborative goal setting, accountability, and evaluation systems; public

engagement in working together with parents, families, churches and other leaders in school

compliance and protecting the rights of parents to choose the educational program that best

meets the educational and spiritual needs of their child (ACSI, 2016). Participants shared being

affiliated with ACSI means accountability for the Christian school leader, establishes legitimacy

of the Christian school and helps provide guidelines and directions on how to build the school

community of faith. ACSI understands the uniqueness of Christian education and sets the

standards and expectations for Christian school leaders and staff to achieve based on the

Christian philosophy of education toward nurturing students' spiritual development.

Practical Implications

There are also several practical implications, and they are nurturing the spiritual life of

the school leader, providing spiritual experiences, and spiritual development of the school

community of faith. Stonehouse (2006) explained, as participants confirmed, nurturing the

spiritual life includes giving children the language of faith which keeps the experience of God

alive where others also affirm its reality, the knowledge of God through Scriptures and narratives which helps children make sense of life and connect with the reality of God and God's ways, embraced by a faith community through experiences in prayer and worship and other faith practices, which creates a sense of belonging and identity and allows children and adolescents a safe and supportive environment to ask and process questions about faith and life. Each participant communicated the importance of his/her own spiritual growth and the responsibility of spiritual leadership perceived to impact the creation of a school environment where spiritual nurture can occur in ACSI affiliated schools. Bartsch (2006) explained spirituality develops as it is lived, practiced and experienced with opportunities for individuals to spend time in prayer, meditation and reflection. All of the Christian school leaders expressed a sincere desire and commitment to serve as spiritual leader and expressed the importance of being grounded in Scripture to lead staff and students in their spiritual growth. The principal has a key role in leading, participating in and conducting school worship, leading and surrounding all of the school activities in public and private prayer, promoting and leading in the study of God's word, and teaching the basics of faith to the members of the school community (Bartsch, 2006). Spiritual leadership in Christian schools helps to promote spiritual growth and development in members of the school community of faith. As the principal or head of school leads in providing spiritual school experiences, he/she also encourages others in the school community to do the same which empowers staff and students, to practice and build their faith in living as Christians in their daily life.

Delimitations and Limitations

The present study had several limitations and delimitations. The study was delimited to eleven current Christian school leaders of ACSI schools in Pennsylvania. The schools were

specifically selected based on their affiliation with ACSI and their aligned mission statement with the mission of ACSI. The study was delimited to an ACSI affiliation which defined Christian in relation to organization, school, and educators who embody a biblical worldview, who engage in transformational teaching and discipleship, and who embrace personal and professional growth as promoted by ACSI. The study was also delimited to current Christian school leaders who were chosen because they were likely to have existing school leadership practices established in ACSI schools which they serve as principal or head of school. Thus, this is a delimitation of the study because no Christian school or Christian school leaders without ACSI affiliation were explored in this study.

In addition, the study could have been limited by ACSI affiliated schools in Pennsylvania where the study lacks generalizability of the results (Creswell, 2014). The study was also limited by the nature of data reporting where all data were self-reported by participants. In addition, only four individuals shared documents that related to and supported their Christian school leadership practices, and only four were available to engage in the focus group interview which further limited the study. In addition, securing participants was very challenging at the start of the study and obtaining permission from ACSI to identify affiliated schools and school leaders took two to three months. By the time ACSI approval was received, Christian school leaders were on summer school schedules which limited availability of school leaders who expressed an interest, but lacked the time due to previously scheduled summer vacation time. Lack of availability during the summer months extended my time in searching, contacting, and securing other Christian school leaders who were available to participate in each phase of data collection. In addition, I did not rely solely on ACSI marketing to help recruit and secure participants. I felt I needed to conduct the open web search of ACSI schools in Pennsylvania, which took two to

three weeks to complete. Therefore, the study was also limited by the timeframe for data collection.

Recommendations for Future Research

While the present study made important discoveries, the following are areas in need of further study. As this study was limited to ACSI schools in Pennsylvania, broadening the area and conducting this study with Christian school leaders of ACSI schools in other states may be valuable in exploring similar experiences of other Christian school leaders. Similarly, participants only included current Christian school leaders of ACSI affiliated schools. During my search for participants, there were school leaders who just completed service in their Christian school leader position at an ACSI school and transitioning to a new career path. These Christian school leaders were not utilized in this study. Therefore, exploring former and current Christian school leaders of ACSI affiliated schools can provide varied experiences and perspectives. Although not the focus or an imminent factor in this study, Christian school leaders who described their schools as smaller Christian schools shared a different perspective regarding leadership practices than Christian school leaders of larger Christian schools. Christian school leaders in smaller schools may serve in multiple roles, responsibilities and duties. Therefore, a study comparing the perceptions of Christian school leadership practices in smaller Christian schools versus larger Christian schools may also be very valuable in adding to the literature of Christian school leadership practices and identify specific needs and challenges of smaller and larger ACSI Christian schools. Moreover, as teachers are more directly involved with students' spiritual development and growth in Christian schools, further exploration of leadership practices that impact the school community of faith from the teachers' and students' perspectives may provide insight into leadership practices that help the spiritual nurture of

students in ACSI schools. Securing a funding source to sponsor further research in Christian

school leadership practices could expand the research setting, provide an incentive to recruit

additional Christian school leaders, and cover traveling expenses for other data collection

methods, such as observations, which could greatly benefit similar research in this area.

Summary

Christian school leaders understand the importance of their key role as the spiritual head

of the school in developing and leading the school community of faith. As the spiritual head of

the school, there are additional factors and areas of responsibility which the principal or head of

school needs in order to impact the spiritual development of the school community of faith

(Bartsch, 2006). The principal or head of school must first take seriously his/her own spiritual

growth and development and not only provide opportunities for spiritual development of staff

and students, but also leading by example in conducting, participating, facilitating, and

surrounding all of the school activities and spiritual school experiences to fulfill the aim of

Christian education (Bartsch, 2006). Likewise, as Jesus experienced intellectual, spiritual,

physical, and social growth and development as he "increased in wisdom and stature, and in

favour with God and man" (Luke 2:52, KJV), Christian school leadership practices carry out the

mission in thought and action towards the spiritual development of children and youth in an

intentional, nurturing manner (ACSI, 2016). As previously noted in the literature review,

spiritual leadership is the theoretical basis on which to contextualize Christian school leadership

in this study. Christian educators must shift their focus on spirituality as a way to lead "rising

generations" (Pazmino, 2010, p. 356) to Jesus Christ in belief, faith and action. Christ's public

ministry in the Holy Spirit is an example of understanding the person and work of Christian

education and Holy Spirit in Christian leadership. Christian school leaders believe through the

Holy Spirit, the person maintains a relationship with God the Creator and finds purpose in living

a Christ-centered life. Christian education is the spiritual formation and spiritual development

"process of growing in our relationship with God and becoming conformed to Christ through the

power of the Holy Spirit" (Pazmino, 2010, p. 358). For this reason, the practices of spiritual

leadership are most important in Christian school leadership to help build the school community

of faith and impact the creation of an environment where spiritual nurture can occur in students.

Christian school leadership is a unique type of leadership in service to others as Jesus Christ

Himself came to serve (Dockery, 2011). As an integral part of the call of God to serve and

nurture others, Christian school leaders described important spiritual leadership practices in the

Christian education community of faith which included: leading by example, engaging biblical

studies and encouraging and supporting teachers in their biblical studies, incorporating biblical

foundation of Holy Scriptures in decision-making and helping staff understand the biblical

foundations in those decisions, demonstrating and fostering an attitude of service in the school

and the world, based on theology of the cross, valuing the teaching of Christian studies, ensuring

time and resources are provided for teachers, providing guidance for staff as they work through

the implementation of classroom issues such as behavior management based on a sound group of

law and Gospel, ensuring the spiritual development of the Christian faith and ensuring the

spiritual development of staff and students, and providing opportunities to develop spirituality

with prayer and meditation to create an environment where spiritual nurture can occur (Bartsch,

2006).

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APPENDIX

Appendix A

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

April 20, 2018

Deborah Hollis
IRB Approval 3173.042018: How Christian School Leadership Practices Impact the Creation of an Environment Where Spiritual Nurture Can Occur in Students: A Phenomenological Investigation

Dear Deborah Hollis,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
The Graduate School

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Appendix B

ACSI Graduate Student Research Proposal

Deborah Hollis

Doctoral Student

School of Education

Liberty University

April 14, 2018

Overview of the Nature and Purposes of the Research

Christian leadership is unique and requires a commitment to lead others intentionally to a committed faith in Jesus Christ and living a Christ centered life. Research that gives a voice to the leadership practices perceived by Christian school leaders in fulfilling the mission of creating an environment where spiritual nurture can occur, is missing. The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand how leadership practices or responsibilities are perceived by Christian school leaders to impact a school community of faith. There are three research questions that will be used to guide this study, which are as follows: RQ1. How do Christian school leaders perceive their leadership practices impact the creation of an environment where spiritual nurture can occur in students? RQ2. How do Christian school leaders perceive their theological beliefs impact the creation of an environment where spiritual nurture can occur in students? RQ3. How do Christian school leaders perceive their leadership and development of the spirituality impact the creation of an environment where spiritual nurture can occur in students? The major constructs of the study are spiritual leadership factors which focuses on the role of the Christian school principal or head of school and Christian leadership practices necessary for creating an environment where spiritual nurturing can occur. In addition, the

Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) and their affiliated schools also focus on supporting leadership competencies that prepare children and youth to grow in the knowledge and faith of Jesus Christ as Savior and Redeemer of humankind. The data obtained from the research questions will provide information regarding Christian leadership practices that nurture the growth of children and adolescents in ACSI affiliated K-12 Christian schools. In addition, the data obtained will provide principals or heads of Christian schools with a practical basis on which to consider how to deal with the various demands of a spiritual leader in a Christian school environment.

Full Description of Participants

My study will focus on the principal, administrator, or school leader of an ACSI affiliated Christian school in Western Pennsylvania. ACSI affiliated schools include both member and accredited schools. The sample will include individuals who have experienced the phenomenon of Christian school leadership practices perceived to impact the creation of a school environment where spiritual nurture can occur in students. Each participant must currently serve in a Christian school leadership position at an ACSI affiliated Christian school in Western Pennsylvania. The sample size will range from 12-15 or more participants, with not less than 10. No minors will be used as participants in this study.

Procedures

The first step of the research study following a successful defense will be to obtain approval from the International Review Board (IRB) of Liberty University to conduct research and obtain access to the setting and participants. After confirmation that the proposed research study is approved, I will use a World Wide Web search to identify Christian schools in Western PA. Through criterion sampling of ACSI affiliated schools, I will contact Christian school

leaders via email explaining the research study in-depth and then requesting their participation in the study. Study participants will also be informed of the motivation for their selection, granted anonymity and provide the purpose of the study which will help build rapport. The research material can only be accessed by the researcher through registered email account and logging in using a secured username and password created by the researcher. This ensures privacy for the participant's responses.

A criterion sampling of Christian school leaders will be conducted using an open World Wide Web search of ACSI affiliated schools. Christian school leaders in Western Pennsylvania region will be contacted via email to participate in the study. Consent forms will be emailed in the process of criterion sampling for participants to provide permission to participate. Participants will be given instructions on how to print, sign, scan/fax and then mail or email the consent form to me. After consent forms are received via secured email account, fax, or mail, telephone interviewing process will be conducted using open-ended questions to collect data. The participants will be required to provide a pseudonym for the school leader's name and school name or for any identifiable information. The responses of the participants will then be transcribed verbatim. The data collected will be analyzed according to the transcendental phenomenological method established for the interview data. Furthermore, data collection for this study will be obtained from telephone interviews using open-ended questions, documents as official memos, meeting minutes, written procedures and policies, and a focus group for data analysis.

Interviews for the proposed study will involve using open-ended questions to gain an understanding of the phenomenon of the proposed study, how Christian school leadership practices impact the creation of a school environment where spiritual nurture can occur in

students. The participants will be Christian school leaders currently serving leadership roles in

ACSI Christian schools. Initial contact of the participants will be via email correspondence to

introduce the study, allow participants to agree as participant of the study, and contact

information to schedule a telephone interview time and day (See Appendix B). For the

individual interviews, the participants will be encouraged to choose a location that is free of

distraction for the purpose of audio recording. My interview setting will be in a quiet home

office with no distractions.

The proposed research study will use different methods for collecting data to provide

corroborating evidence and validity to the findings. Documents will also be collected for

analysis as Christian school leadership practices may show written forms and the presentation of

specific documented leadership practices. Participants have the option to provide documents as

additional information in clarifying their role, responsibilities, and school leadership practices as

spiritual leaders in school community of faith. Multiple forms of data collection are

recommended so that the researcher can build an in-depth picture and description of the

phenomenon. A focus group will also be utilized to gain additional information (see Appendix

B). The use of audio recording is necessary to transcribe the conversation. Participants will be

informed of the audio recording of the focus group session in the request email. After

participant's agreement to participate in the study conducted using Free Conference Call.com,

the date and time of the session will be arranged with the participant as well as contact

information provided for the participant to join the session. Focus group questions will be used to

gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon.

Potential Benefits

The study provides no direct benefits to the participants. This study provides important information about school leadership practices which benefits Christian school leadership organizations like ACSI who support Christian educators and schools internationally. This study is worth doing because it will provide empirical data valuable in Christian school leadership literature and will provide information that may help improve Christian school leadership practices in nurturing the spiritual growth of children, adolescents, and school communities of faith. This research will help describe various perspectives of Christian school leadership practices within the context of spiritual leadership. This study will also help develop an understanding of the role of the principal or head of school as the spiritual leader within a community of faith. In preparation and training, this study will provide principals or heads of schools with a practical basis on which to consider how to deal with the various demands as a spiritual leader in an environment where spiritual nurture can occur. The importance and benefits of this research also lies in emphasizing Christian leadership approaches to nurturing the spiritual growth of children and adolescents and research to better understand the varying experiences in religious community settings such as Christian school which can impact the spiritual life of children and adolescents. Thus, this research will be beneficial as it investigates how Christian school leadership impacts the creation of a school environment where spiritual nurture can occur in students.

Risk Assessment

The only risk to participants is a breach in confidentiality if the data are lost or stolen.

Means to Minimize Risk

Study participants will be granted confidentiality; a pseudonym will be used for the school leader's name, school name, and any identifiable information. The list of pseudonyms will

be stored separately from the other research data. Telephone interviews will be conducted in a

quiet room with minimal distractions. The documents will be emailed/faxed by participants and

can only be accessed by me through a registered email account and through logging in with a

secured username and password. Study participants will be provided a Free Conference

Call.com phone number, date, and time of online interview sessions via email. All data obtained

throughout the study will be placed in a safe and secure location, where only I will be able to

access the data. I will keep the research data secure in a password-locked computer and

duplicated on a jump drive as back up storage; both will be kept in a locked desk. Only I, as the

researcher, will have access to the research data. Once the three-year period required by federal

regulations expires, the paper research data will be shredded and electronic data/audio recordings

will be deleted from electronic devices. Although names/titles will be identifiable from the raw

data, only the researcher will know this information. It will remain confidential and kept from

the public.

Written Informed Consent

The consent form will be included as an attachment in the initial recruitment email

correspondence which will introduce my research and instructions on how to download, print,

sign the consent form and return the document to me as a scanned to email document or fax. All

consent forms will be provided with this proposal.

Copies of IRB application, open-ended interview prompts, focus group prompts,

participant recruitment email, and informed consent form will be sent along with this proposal.

Projected Timeline for Conducting Research

The projected timeline for conducting my research will prayerfully begin in April 2018,

which of course is based upon ACSI Graduate Student Research Proposal approval and Liberty

University IRB approval to begin the data collection. During the month of May 2018 I will be completing the data analysis and writing of my final chapters of the dissertation will be in the months of June and July 2018. I hope to defend my dissertation and pass my dissertation defense in August 2018. "I can do all things through Christ which stengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13-17).

ACSI agreement between ACSI and myself, as researcher, is included on the next page.

Association of Christian Schools International
Research Department
731 Chapel Hills Drive
Colorado Springs, CO 80920

The proposal, as approved by ACSI, becomes the agreement between ACSI and the researcher. Therefore, the proposal must be an accurate description of the research project. The proposal, informed consent documents, and other supporting materials become part of the public record of ACSI's approval process. Any changes in the approved proposal, including supporting documents, must be approved by ACSI. To ensure the integrity of the research study, the proposal will not be available for review by the public until the research project is completed.

I affirm that this proposal is an accurate description of the way this research will be conducted.

March 16, 2018

▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇
Signature   Date

I affirm that this proposal has been approved by my department chair/director.

March 16, 2018

▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇
Signature   Date

Researcher's Name

Deborah L. Hollis

Street Address

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Email Address

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Appendix C

Recruitment Email

May 28, 2018

Dear Christian School Leader:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for an EdD degree. The purpose of my research is to understand how administrative practices are perceived to create an environment where spiritual nurture can occur in students, and I am writing to invite you to participate in my study.

If you are currently a principal or head of an ACSI affiliated Christian school and are willing to participate, you will be asked to: (1) participate in a one-on-one telephone interview for 60 minutes using open-ended questions which focus on Christian school leadership practices and will be audio-recorded to be transcribed by the researcher for data analysis; (2) submit documents as artifacts to the researcher as needed, following the interview, and used to clarify your role, responsibilities, and leadership practices as described in your interview; and (3) participate in an online focus group session using Free Conference Call.com and respond to prompts related to leadership practices in your assigned Christian school and audio recorded to be transcribed by the researcher for data analysis. It should take approximately three weeks for you to complete the procedures listed. Your participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected.

To participate, click on and download the attached consent form included in this email. The consent document contains additional information about my research. Print and sign the consent form and return the completed form to me by email as a scanned document or via fax to ▉▉▉▉▉▉▉. I will send you an email confirmation that your completed consent document was received. Following receipt of my email confirmation, contact me at ▉▉▉▉▉▉▉ to schedule an interview.

Your participation will be greatly appreciated. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Deborah Hollis
Principal Investigator/Researcher

Appendix D

Liberty University IRB Informed Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

How Christian School Leadership Practices Impact the Creation of a School Environment
Where Spiritual Nurture Can Occur in Students: A Phenomenological Investigation
Deborah Hollis
Liberty University
School of Education

You are being invited to participate in a research study about the perceptions of Christian school leadership practices. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a Christian school leader of an Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) affiliated Christian school in Pennsylvania. Your participation, if you agree, will provide valuable research literature in Christian school leadership and will particularly provide research that gives a voice to the leadership practices perceived by Christian school leaders in fulfilling the mission of creating an environment where spiritual nurturing can occur in Christian schools. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Deborah Hollis, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to understand how Christian school leadership practices impact ACSI affiliated Christian schools in creating an environment where spiritual nurturing can occur. The study is seeking to answer research questions that focus on how Christian school leaders perceive that their leadership practices, their theological basis, and their leadership and development of the spirituality of others, impacts the creation of a school environment where spiritual nurturing can occur in students.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following things:
1. Participate in a 60-minute one-on-one telephone interview to answer some important questions relating to leadership practices in your assigned Christian school. Interviews will be audio-recorded to be transcribed verbatim for data analysis.
2. Submit documents to the researcher as needed, following the interview. Documents will be analyzed as artifacts to clarify your role, responsibilities and school leadership practices as described in your interview.
3. Participate in a telephone 60-minute focus group session using Free Conference Call.com and respond to prompts related to leadership practices in your assigned Christian school. This focus group session will also be audio recorded, so that I can later transcribe your responses verbatim for data analysis.

Risks and Benefits of Participation:
The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

As a participant, you should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include helping Christian education associations like the Association of Christian Schools International and Christian school leaders to understand components of spiritual leadership, which helps to intentionally nurture staff, students, and a school community of faith.

Compensation: Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. I may share the data I collect from you for use in future research studies or with other researchers; if I share the data that I collect about you, I will remove any information that could identify you, if applicable, before I share the data.

- As a participant, you will be given a pseudonym. I will conduct the interviews in a private location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password locked computer or locked filing cabinet and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted from any electronic devices, and transcriptions and all paper records will be shredded.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only I, as the researcher, will have access to these recordings.
- I cannot assure participants that other members of the focus group will not share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or your school. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study:

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Deborah Hollis. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at 412-552-0323 or dhollis@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty advisor, Dr. Kenneth R. Tierce, at .

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 1887, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

(NOTE: DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS IRB APPROVAL INFORMATION WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN ADDED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

_____

_____
Signature of Participant   Date

_____

_____
Signature of Investigator   Date

Appendix E

Focus Group Prompts

1. In 30-60 seconds, share a little bit about your hobbies, interests, and families.

2. What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the terms "Christian school leader" and "spiritual nurture?"

3. What do you believe it means to be a school leader of a Christian school affiliated with the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI)?

4. What do you think of your role as the Christian school leader in an ACSI affiliated Christian school?

5. How do you believe your role as the Christian school leader relates to the mission of the Christian school?

6. In what ways do you believe your leadership practices fulfill the mission of a Christian school?

7. Which Christian school leadership practices do you believe show an expression of the Christian faith in the school community?

8. Which Christian school leadership practices do you believe help the spiritual formation of the school community of faith?

9. Which Christian school leadership practices do you believe help new staff and students who have their own expressions of spirituality to understand the existing practice of spirituality in the school community of faith?

10. Which Christian school leadership practices do you believe demonstrate total dependence on biblical foundations in the Holy Scriptures in the school community of faith?

11. In which ways do you believe a Christian school leader leads by example in the school community?

12. Of all the Christian school leadership practices we discussed, which one is most important to you?

13. Is there anything else you would like to add to previous comments or statements made during the focus group session?

Appendix F

Zimmer Christian School

Bible Evaluation Artifact

Kindergarten

- Students will retell Bible stories that emphasize God's love.
- Students will recognize their need of a savior and receive God's gift of salvation.
- Students will demonstrate obedience, honesty, sharing, responsibility, self-control, gentleness, thankfulness, politeness, kindness, goodness, faith, patience, peace, love, joy, and confidence.
- Students will recite a scripture verse for each letter of the alphabet.
- Students will sing of hymns and choruses that will help them learn more about God and His word.

1st Grade

- After teaching the story of Creation and Adam and Eve, the students will sing the "Creation Song".
- After teaching about Noah, the students will color pictures.
- After teaching the stories of Jacob and Joseph and viewing the videos, the students will act out the Bible stories.
- After teaching about Moses and the Ten Commandments, the students will make a booklet of the 10 commandments.
- After teaching the Bible stories of David and the Psalms, the students will sing some of the Psalms and songs about David.
- The students will recite Bible verses weekly to go along with each Bible story.

2nd Grade Bible

- Given Bible stories and videos about Old Testament Bible characters (Moses, Joshua, Daniel, Job, Esther, Elijah, Jesus, Ruth, David, Nehemiah, Miriam, Abraham, Martha, Peter, Paul, and Silas), the students will complete a test about each character with 80% accuracy.
- Given glossary terms, the students will relate the terms to the Biblical time era by creating a time line.
- Given a weekly Bible verse, the student will memorize and give an oral recitation of the verse without having any prompts.

3rd Grade Bible

- After proper instruction, students will be able to create a chronological overview of history of the Bible.
- After proper instruction, students will be able to identify facts about the life of Christ including his birth, miracles, parables, death, resurrection, and ascension.
- After proper instruction, students will be able to identify facts about the life of Paul including his conversion, missionary trips, and letters
- Students will list facts about several missionaries and Christian heroes.
- Students will know the steps of salvation and be able to share them with another person.

4th Grade Bible

- Students will demonstrate a knowledge of Bible Doctrine: God, man, fall of man, the trinity, salvation, angels, and Christ through test questions and class discussions
- Students will use Bible tools, such as a concordance, timeline, and maps with instruction.
- Students will recite orally given scripture verses.
- Students will apply their knowledge in their walk with God

5th Grade Bible

- Students will recite from memory a monthly Bible passage
- Students will explain God's plan of salvation through Jesus Christ as it is revealed through the Bible
- Students will be able to orally retell and summarize, through a variety of individual test questions, the major events that occur in the book of Genesis.
- Students will be able to orally retell and summarize, through a variety of individual test questions, the important events surrounding the given Biblical Characters
- Students will be able to identify the choices and consequences of given Biblical Characters.
- Students will orally retell and explain, through a variety of individual test questions, God's covenant with Abraham and his descendants
- Students will be able to discuss the faithfulness of God to His people throughout the Old Testament.
- Students will be able to orally retell and summarize, through a variety of individual test questions, God's faithfulness to maintain the Abrahamic covenant with the Hebrew people today.
- Through examining the lives of Biblical characters, students will be able to discuss the importance of: obedience, forgiveness, faithfulness, trust, submission to God's will, making wise choices, leadership, love, loyalty, and withstanding peer pressure.

6th Grade Bible

- Students will list the first three kings of Israel and explain who chose them and who anointed them.
- Students will name significant people in the lives of the first three kings and list why they played an important role.
- Students will summarize the steps leading to Israel being given a king.
- Students will list the components of the Davidic covenant
- Students will describe each prophet's major role in representing God to His people.
- Students will identify characteristics of Jesus as King, Priest, Teacher, and God in the scriptures.
- Students will analyze their relationship with Jesus Christ.

7th Grade Bible – New Testament Survey

- The student will articulate what it means to be saved and how one gains salvation
- The student will list the books of the New Testament.
- The student will list thirty-two events of the New Testament in chronological order from Pentecost to the Revelation to John.
- After reading each of the epistles, the student will list important themes found in the epistle.
- After reading each epistle, students will compare and contrast important themes with the views of the world.
- The student will discover through Scripture Biblical proof that man is saved by grace through faith not works.
- The student will identify the important role the apostle Paul played in spreading the gospel of Jesus to the gentiles.
- Through journal writing the student will begin to develop the discipline of study and meditating on Biblical truths.

8th Grade Bible – Old Testament Survey
- At the completion of the school year students will be able to list 55 Old Testament characters in chronological order.
- At the completion of the school year students will be able to expound upon the strengths, weaknesses, successes, and failures of each Old Testament character.
- At the completion of the school year students will emulate character traits from chosen Old Testament characters.
- By the end of the school year, students will apply to their lives biblical truths that have been gleaned from chosen Bible character's lives, and will be displaying this character to everyone.

9th Grade Bible – Life of Christ

- Students will list the various names Christ.

- Students will discuss the fact that God planned the life of Christ in the Old Testament with concrete examples from the Bible
- Students will know who Jesus Christ is and differentiate between Jesus as a prophet, Priest, and King through group diagrams with examples from Scripture.
- Through scripture reading and exams students will discover why Jesus came to earth.
- Through completion of worksheet students will be identify the lessons that Jesus taught through the Gospel
- Students will discover the Kingdom of God and what one must do to enter it
- Students will be explain the nature of a parable by creating their own parable based on the teachings of Christ.
- Through examination of people in the Bible, students will see the power of choice and the consequences that go with it.
- Students will learn repentance through scripture activity finding the theme of repentance
- Through discussion and the story of the Leper students will learn compassion.
- Students will recite the 10 commandments.
- Students will identify evidence of sin in everyday life by finding current stories in newspapers of those who are not obeying God's law.
- Students will be able to identify the forces of evil through discussion.
- Through group activity, students will discover that Christ conquers evil.
- Students will discover Christ's power and majesty through a classroom game using Bible verses.
- Students will grow in their own relationship with Jesus by writing a paragraph stating how Christ has changed their life when they decided to trust in him
- Through lecture and handout, students will identify basic geographic locations of the Bible.

10th Grade Bible – Missions

- Student will identify evidence in Scripture that God has a missionary heart.
- Students will identify evidence in Scripture that Jesus trained his disciples to spread the news of salvation.
- Students will name 3 Old Testament characters who served as missionaries.
- Students will identify principles in Acts that govern missions today.
- Students will define: sin, atonement, ransom, salvation, disciple, Jews, Gentiles, evangelism, tentmakers, and church planters.
- Students will summarize the Great Commission.
- Students will describe several phases of mission work.
- Students will describe several types of mission work.
- Students will list three challenges missionaries face.
- Students will list three ways they can support missions.
- Students will list three principles for discerning God's will.
- Students will read and discuss Peace Child.
- Students will explain the Peace Child concept.

11th Grade Bible - Worldview Objectives

- Students will define the concept of a worldview.
- Students will demonstrate working knowledge of vocabulary used in text.
- Students will identify the attributes of God defined in the text.
- Students will distinguish between general and special revelation.
- Students will contrast the philosophies of Biblical Christianity, Marxism and Secular Humanism.
- Students will describe the role of faith in philosophy.
- Students will compare and contrast theologies of the secular humanist, the cosmic humanist and the Christian.
- Students will gain knowledge on the psychological worldview in each of the worldviews studied.
- Students will discuss and analyze the society based on the worldviews that are relevant to current social issues.
- Students will contrast the role of the state in each worldview.
- Students will describe humanist arguments for and against socialism.
- Students will explain why the free enterprise system is the most effective economic system for a fallen world.
- Students will contrast Biblical and non-biblical views of social justice and equality.

12th Grade Bible – Christian Ethics and Apologetics

- Having completed the reading of "The Way of the Word", students will be able to differentiate Bible poetry from narratives and epistles and describe basic exegesis principles.
- Students will be able to apply the six criteria of when, why, and what; how, where, and who to books of the Bible.
- Students will demonstrate a fundamental awareness of obedience, recognize God's love for them as individuals, and begin to feel comfort in expressing dependence upon Him by their lifestyle and/or testimony.
- Students will use "Interlinear Greek-English New Testament" 3rd Edition, Baker Books, Jay P. Green Sr. – General Translator, to find the Greek word of interest and its corresponding Strong's number.
- Students will know how to find the Greek word for the Strong's number in Strong's Concordance, Thomas Nelson Publisher, 1990, and analyze it relation to the NJ and NIV versions.
- Students will be able to express their understanding of the text in both oral and written form.

- After completing a one month study in Galatians, students will express the basic Christian attitude toward living a Christ-centered life in both oral and written form.
- After completing a one month study in Hebrews, students will express the basic Christian attitude toward faith and God's faithfulness in both oral and written form.
- Having completed the studies of Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews, the students will express the concept behind Habakkuk 2:4 in both written and oral form and show some inclinations toward the lifestyle it reveals.
- Having completed a month study of "Who is this Jesus" and a month study of "What is Truth", students will demonstrate a basic understanding of the key elements of Hinduism, Buddhism, Secular Humanism, and Post Modernism in relation to Christianity in written and oral form.
- After completing a one month study of the key elements of logic, each student will be able to use a truth table to evaluate validity and soundness of deductively reasoned arguments.
- After completing the reading of "Living Loud", Norman L. Geisler and Joseph Holden, Broadman and Holman, 2002, students will be able to describe, discuss, and defend the Christian faith in written and oral form.